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# **Re-thinking Desire.**

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## Summary

This thesis analyses the ways in which desire has been traditionally configured in terms of its relation to both being and becoming. Techniques for the domestication of desire through idealized concepts of community, the subject, the body, life and ethics, are analyzed in respect of their transcendental construction and the practices of power which they legitimate. The critical texts of Immanuel Kant are taken as the primary focus of an attempt to separate the negative values implicit in Humanism from the positive project of Enlightenment thinking. This separation, it is argued, effects a reconceptualization of the classical opposition between Man and Nature, allowing us to elaborate new definitional structures of the above themes (community, the subject, the body, life and ethics). In a postmodern era, these new formulations enable philosophical thought to accept the de-centering and dispersal of the subject without abandoning the critical project of self-experimentation, together with the political and ethical demands produced in the interactions and associations of selves in becoming. In the attempt to open up a space for thinking the desiring self of post-humanism, this writing follows a two-fold course. On the one hand, it argues against the internal organization and rationality of subject-producing ideologies. On the other, it seeks to elucidate the points of resistance in and against the power structures inherent in our societies and at work in our procedures of representation and objectification.

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## Introduction

Desire is the name of a place without boundaries. It is at once the delirious plane of immanence and the treacherous scene of transcendence. In Western philosophy, desire is a battlefield where Being and Becoming are in constant contest for supremacy. It is to the task of facilitating a cartography of this battlefield that this writing is committed.

In what follows we will critically examine the most powerful strategies, utilized in the name of Being, which have sought to configure the landscape of desire by domesticating its inherent force, productivity and transformational creativity. The structures wrought in this way fall under five main headings; community, subjectivity, the body, life and ethics. The aim of this project is to gain an understanding of the way in which these five ideas emerge in Enlightenment, modern and postmodern thought; the nature of their interdependence and the manner of their seeming demise.

The central figure of the text is Immanuel Kant, whose critical writings can be seen to articulate the methodology of desire's domestication and suppression in the name of human progress. The birth of the Kantian Enlightenment

subject conjoined with the exposition of the being of community as the foundation of societal life and bodily experience gives us, at once, both the prescription for the advance of reason and understanding, and a partial diagnosis of the symptoms indicating an immanent collapse of the classical subject (his identity and values) in postmodernist thought.

In the first chapter, we will explore the way in which the Kantian thought of community favors an idea of *communio*, a unity of Being, whose universality is premised upon the internalization of moral law and the aesthetic compromise of sensuality and imagination. The tenor of earlier works on community by Althusius, Rousseau, Hobbes and Locke, in conjunction with the repositioning of the subject in Kantian thought will be seen to have brokered a vacancy in the history of ideas, assuring credibility and influence to a transcendental formulation of community for Enlightenment thought. In the latter part of this chapter we will consider the failure of quasi-Kantian conceptions of community in our era to accommodate the complex subject of postmodernity and the consequent drive to re-assess, through feminist theory (Braidotti and Haraway), justice ethics (Lyotard and Nancy), apocalypse culture (Krockers) and information networking (Rheingold), the basis for commercium, interaction and association at the end of the millennium.

In the second chapter, the inadequacies exhibited by many postmodern and post-humanist formulations of community will be shown to stem from a continued reliance upon the positing of a transcendental and teleologically inclined subject, whether this being be designated as ideal, real, other, lacking or lost. In following through the concatenations of this thought, we will move on to consider the differing ways in which the modern and postmodern subject has been formulated, laying particular stress upon the importance for its deliberation, of the classical divisions between man and woman, man and nature, man and machine. The collapse of these distinctions occurring, as they have done, across a broad spectrum of discourses and practices will lead, in the third chapter, to an examination of the role of the body for postmodern theories of the self (particularly as emerging out of the works of Lingis, Baudrillard, Butler, Deleuze and Foucault). We will consider the efficacy of the bodies metaphorization through theories of becoming and the resistance exhibited in its self-transformations, attacking and de-legitimizing those institutions of power which seek to keep it passive.

Continuing the theme of a re-conceptualization of nature, in the final chapter we will examine the ways in which the concept of life has been extended, on the one hand, through the collapse of earlier definitions of community,

theorizations of the subject and delimitations of the body, and on the other, in respect of developments in evolutionary biology, artificial-life programming and advances in reproductive, medical and genetic technologies. In this context we will lend breadth to the postmodern landscape of desire, mapping upon it those configurations specific to our own time with the range of novel associations and interactions encountered within and promised by it. Our exploration of the postmodern terrain of desire will conclude by addressing the problem of the viability and expediency of re-configuring an ethics of the self for beings-in-becoming in a post-human society for whom the transcendent guarantor and transcendental arbiter of Being have been consigned to the tomb of humanist thought.

## 1. Desire and Community

In the great narratives of Western socio-political philosophy 'man' works towards the construction of a community that would reflect his own image as fully constituted subject and sovereign being. To this end he has employed and worked upon all that is not called man (all that is not-human), those elements of his world that exemplify unpredictability, disorder, dislocation and breakdown (primarily machines, animals, nature and woman).<sup>1</sup> *Man* believed that by shaping and standardizing these entities in his own image (to reflect his own semi-divine visage) he could somehow control them, thus bringing the world itself under his sway and fulfilling his destiny of becoming like-God.<sup>2</sup> But it is these very elements that, in our era of advanced Capitalism, elude the historical imperative that would mediate and control them. As animal and machine parts replace and synthesize human organs, and computer technology melts the boundaries between work and play, war and diplomacy, life and process, etc., the distinctions that have maintained *man* in a position of seeming superiority are disrupted and the relation of user to used is blurred into insignificance. Man is finding himself dispossessed of control, just one partially constituted entity amongst others in the post-human community.

*Community* is becoming schizophrenic<sup>3</sup> as non-human life forms<sup>4</sup> combine ever more effectively in fluid advances of information technology that refuse to be employed within the terrestrial confines of socio-political or ethical projects. The real is becoming indissociable from the virtual as the future floods the present with digitalized promises of immanent dystopia.

Those who refuse and attempt to refute of the coming<sup>5</sup> of the post-human community delude themselves with myths of appropriation (re-appropriations of new configurations of Nature as Other), collating addendums to the body politic and social contract, regrouping in technophobic garrets under the protection of largely defunct institutions, adopting ever more complex and verbose models of exchange in the attempt to protect an illusive identity, reciting the name of 'Justice' in the hope of conjuring up a new politics and a reformed ethics. The sad fact is that we are not yet free from the fetters of the generation of Humanist Enlightenment projects whose ethico-political aspirations continue to orbit a space of ideality that has no place in the postmodern world. Adapting the words of Hobbes, we have yet to "cut the umbilical cord of universalism of Enlightenment" [Leviathan. p.122]

"We are all longing to go home to some place we

have never been - a place, half-remembered, and half-envisioned we can only catch glimpses of from time to time. Community. Somewhere, there are people to whom we can speak with passion, without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power. Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of friends. Somewhere we can be free." [Starhawk. p.82]

Of the seminal texts of Enlightenment philosophy, Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, Critique of Judgement and his essay on "What is Enlightenment?"\*<sup>1</sup> are pivotal to the trajectory of this writing. In the first of these, Kant elucidates the categories of the understanding, under one of which headings is drawn the distinction between *communio* and *commercium*. *Communio*, meaning communion, mutual participation and fellowship (also fortification or entrenchment);

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\* Reference to these and other of Kant's texts will be abbreviated as follows:

Critique of Pure Reason: CPR.      Critique of Judgement: CJ.  
"What is Enlightenment?": Essay.      Anthropology: A.  
"The Idea for a Universal history from a cosmopolitan point of view.": Cosmo.      Conflict of the Faculties: Conflict.



*Commercium*, meaning communication, correspondence, intercourse and commerce, also signifying a dynamical community which makes possible the empirical knowledge of any local community. It is through an elaboration of these two notions (in the CPR), their problematization (in the CJ), and their relation to a particular era of thought (in the Essay), that we may begin tracing a cartography of the landscape of desire, where the essentialist construction of community can be seen to engender the birth of the subject (of community) as the Being of domesticated communal desire.

Community is given in the Critique of Pure Reason as the third division of the logical moment of relation in the table of categories (pure concepts of the understanding). These categories, we are told, are to be discovered by means of "an exhaustive statement of the functions of unity in judgement" [CPR B94]; they are functions which "specify the understanding completely, and yield an exhaustive inventory of its powers." [CPR B105] The category of Community is thus deemed to be an original pure concept of synthesis, contained *a priori* in the understanding and necessarily so if we are to be able to think an object of intuition. Whereas in the Critique of Judgement the *Idea* of Community will be shown to function as the condition for the possibility of there being a *transcendental subject* (a transcendental unity of apperception), in the Critique of Pure Reason, as a category,

it's apparent role is that of condition for the coming into being of the *transcendental object* (as that which makes it possible to think an object of intuition).

Tracing the development of this latter, we must begin by considering the logical form of judgement from which the category of community is derived, this being the form of the disjunctive (the third form under the heading of relation, the other two being those of the categorical and hypothetical). In a disjunctive judgement, Kant tells us, the relation between two or more propositions is not that of logical sequence but of logical opposition,

"in so far as the sphere of one excludes the sphere of the other, and yet at the same time of community, in so far as the propositions taken together occupy the whole sphere of the knowledge in question. The disjunctive relation expresses, therefore, a relation of the parts of the sphere of such knowledge, since the sphere of each part is a complement of the sphere of the others, yielding together the sum-total of the divided knowledge." [CPR B99]

As an example of this, Kant gives us a disjunctive judgement concerning the existence of the world where three possibilities are presented: "The world exists either through

blind chance, or through inner necessity, or through external cause." [ibid] The sphere of possible knowledge about the existence of the world is circumscribed by the community of these disjunctive propositions, each of which occupies a separate sphere within such knowledge. As separate spheres, each of these propositions about the world mutually excludes the others such that: "To take the knowledge out of one of these spheres means placing it in one of the other spheres, and to place it in one sphere means taking it out of the others." [ibid]

Disjunctive judgement, as constituting knowledge through the unity of its components, thus presupposes a certain original belonging together of these parts, that is, there is in play an original synthetic unity of disjuncts that binds them together, in their exclusivity. The nature of this synthesis presupposes a territoriality of knowledge that precludes productive exchange at a fundamental level, that is to say, the process of exchange or association will always be appropriative and cast in terms of an overarching systematic unity.

This is indeed the very nature of synthesis, which, as Kant tells us is "in its most general sense,...the act of putting different representations together, and of grasping what is manifold in them in one [act of] knowledge." [CPR B103]

Difference in the manifold is thus reliant upon the presupposition of unity, indeed it is unity (as an act of synthesis) which makes difference possible by apportioning exclusive territorial rights to its component parts. Difference in this sense can never emerge from out of unity except as exclusive difference (binary opposition). Commerce, interaction or association between spheres will always be cast in terms of the relation of one to an other. As the condition required for the constitution of unity, difference then always presupposes lack. Community is thus the activity of overcoming an immediate or immanent lack through synthesis into a unity.

The activity of synthesis, Kant makes clear, cannot be a self-emergent process, rather, "if this manifold is to be known, the spontaneity of our thought requires that it be gone through in a certain way, taken up, and connected." [CPR B102] This "certain way" will be dictated by the temporalizing determinations of schematization, demanded by a "spontaneity of thought" that operates on the basis of differentiation through opposition. Logically, although not temporally prior to the knowable synthesis procured by the understanding is however, the operation of "synthesis in general" which is "the mere result of the power of imagination, a blind but indispensable function of the soul" [CPR B103] The implication here is then that the originary

synthesis at work in the disjunctive judgement is an activity not of the understanding, but of pure productive imagination, and that it is only through this function carried out in accordance with the categories of the understanding (with community), that knowledge first becomes possible. And yet, because of the fact that the operation of productive imagination is constrained to relate to intuition only by means of the determining network of the schematized categories (and due to the primary relation between intuition and sensation being functionally blocked out of the explanatory hypothesis of communication in the CPR), the cognitively unfettered nature of the relationship between intuition and productive imagination can only remain a problem for Kant at this stage. As is shown above, Kant's very definition of the disjunctive judgement that makes the thought of community possible is conducted on the basis of there being a pre-established community of knowledge (*communio intellectus*). Such difficulties indicate that where statements, like the following, appear in the CPR, there is a community of thought that is in excess of the parameters of this First Critique:

"The appearances might, indeed, constitute intuition without thought [*gedankenlose Anschauung*], but not knowledge..... These perceptions would not then belong to any experience, consequently would be without an

object, merely a blind play of representations,  
even less than a dream." [CPR A111-112]

In the third analogy of experience, where Kant attempts a proof of the principle of coexistence in accordance with the law of reciprocity or community, we are told that, "the coexistence of substances in space cannot be known in experience save on the assumption of their reciprocal interaction". [CPR B257] Community understood as *commercium*, that is, reciprocal interaction "is therefore the condition of the possibility of the things themselves as objects of experience." [CPR B258] Kant goes on however, to qualify the nature of reciprocation on the basis of mutuality, "each substance...must...contain in itself the causality of certain determinations in the other substance, and at the same time the effects of the causality of the other." [ibid] The community of substance is therefore mutually determined insofar as we are able to perceive any part of it: "the substances must stand, immediately or mediately, in dynamical community, if their coexistence is to be known in any possible experience." [CPR B259].

The *commercium* that is dynamical community, is however governed by the schematized category of coexistence and relates specifically to substance as that which is intuited accordingly. Community as *commercium*, can thus be taken as

something that is produced by the spontaneity of thought, whose transcendental determination of time--the time of such interaction--is possible only given that it rests upon an originary community as *communio* of apperception:

"In our mind, all appearances, since they are contained in possible experience, must stand in community (*communio*) of apperception, in so far as the objects are to be represented as coexisting in connection with each other, they must mutually determine their position in one time, and thereby constitute a whole." [CPR B261. My emphasis.]

The problematization of an original condition of community as *commercium* in the privileging of the *communio* of apperception remains unresolved in the text of the CPR. The next section will thus approach community through Kant's later texts, where the being of apperception is more fully examined.

## 2. Sensus Communis: The Rational Community.

Kant tells us that the minimal prerequisite for "claiming the name of man" is the possession of a "common understanding [*gemeine Menschenverstand*]", and to this "mere healthy (not yet cultivated) understanding" he gives the name *sensus communis*.<sup>6</sup> These claims are to be found in the Critique of Judgement [1790] and are dependent upon the following moves:

(1) From *sensus communis* to a sense common to all [*allgemeine sinne*], thought of as *Gemeinschaft* [community] or *Gemeinschaftlichen*, [a sense of community]. (2) From this *gemeinschaftlichen* of *sensus communis* to the idea of a universal communicability [*allgemeine mitteilbarkeit*], and of the universal voice [*allgemeine stimme*] that is a univocity in one voice (or attunement) [*Einstimmung*]. (3) From universal communicability or voice to society [*Gesellschaft*].

In order to elucidate the program of the *sensus communis* it is necessary to give consideration to some other of Kant's critical texts: The Anthropology [1798], "The Idea for a Universal history from a cosmopolitan point of view" [1784] and the Conflict of the Faculties [1798]. In combination, these works fill out the body of the *sensus communis* and enable us to better explore the purported linkages of common sense, community, communicability and society, revealing the tension at work in Kant's distinction between communio and



commercium in the CPR. This exploration will open up a critical space in relation to both pre- and post-Kantian thinkers of community, clarifying the myth of *communio* and the commemoration of, or mourning for, its lack, as a terminal (if not already defunct) thought of the human essence (as full body of the subject and as being-self). This in turn, will lead to an assessment of attempts to rethink the remaining possibility of community (qua *commercium*) as the only possibility left to us once politics, ethics and theology have been debunked as the outmoded rituals of a redundant humanism.<sup>7</sup> The trajectory out of the following sections will be concerned with the effectiveness of retaining a thought of *commercium* for a post-human community, and an assessment of the consequences of replacing the grounding Idea of an "in-common" with complex processes of life and force.

The definition of the minimal conditions for entering into the species of the human, which is equally, in Kantian terms, the minimal condition for having experience (and thereby a sense of community), is to be a creature capable of Enlightenment; Man born unto himself. For man, as rational animal<sup>8</sup>, is the only creature able to give to himself his own destiny; that is, able to give to himself the possibility of realizing the essence of his own humanity, through auto-generation.

Across the literary divide from Kant stands Genet who expresses the same theme thus:

"Insatiable jealousy, of oneself, already (I am missing, I miss myself): to knock down the thin walls, the clefts, the partitions in order to occupy all the places at once, to love (oneself) in (the) place of the other, to put an end to the worst suffering (to be jealous enough of not even being able to appropriate jealousy as one's suffering, one's evil, one's very own), to swallow oneself, to touch oneself, to deliver oneself, to give birth to oneself and to give oneself one's own, then to band oneself erect to death, finally to masturbate oneself or to fuck oneself or to fuck oneself by flowing out of oneself [*en s'écoulant*]: *je m'ec, je m'enc.*" [Genet. As quoted in Derrida's Glas p.180]

For Genet, as for Kant, man comes into being with the thought of communing, that is, subject and community are born in the same instant through an antipathy or antagonism towards society which operates as both the expression and repression of their relation.' Kant tells us that we (a "we" that is almost Hegelian here), must strive hard to "maintain and restore to the mind...that bare negative which properly constitutes enlightenment" [CJ. p.137ff.] That bare negative--the space of the noumenon, self-mastery through being--the

Idea of community spawned in the tensile structure of an exclusive yet essential disjunction (community, in this sense, will always remain and be that for which we labour). For Kant it is the dream of the cosmopolitan civil society, the society in concord, the state, the destiny towards which reason incessantly drives us by virtue of our rationality and against which our so called natural animal instincts (our selfishness and secrecy) are perpetually contested.

In Cosmo, Kant states that all natural capacities of a creature are destined to evolve completely to their natural end, from the Anthropology however, we learn that whilst this may be the case for individual animals, for human beings (the only rational animals on this planet) our natural end can be achieved only as a species.

"It could well be that on another planet there might be rational beings who could not think in any other way but aloud. These beings would not be able to have thoughts without voicing them at the same time, whether they be awake or asleep, whether in the company of others or alone...[However] Unless they are all as pure as angels, we cannot conceive how they would be able to live at peace with each other, how anyone could have respect for anyone else, and how they could get along with each other." [A. p.250]

The dream of total transparency is premised upon an ethical imperative of respect and undercut by the fundamentally unethical nature of the human animal. Man, as an individual terrestrial creature, is always at odds with himself in that he is stretched out between the extremes of animality and rationality, and the demands that are made by production at each of these two extremes. That he is able, however, to admit that "this [our] race of terrestrial rational beings deserves no honorable place among other rational beings of the universe (unknown to us)...[is]...such a condemning judgement [that it] reveals a moral capacity of the species, an innate summons of reason" which enables us to work "through progressive organization of the citizens of the earth within and towards the species as a system which is united by cosmopolitan bonds." [A. p.251. My emphasis.]

Reason, Kant tells us, is the faculty of "widening the rules and purposes of the use of all its powers far beyond natural instincts." [Cosmo. p.416] It progresses by trial and practice (for it is not instinctual) and given that men are finite beings, it will take generations of the exercise of this power; generations of men who have attained their own enlightenment and passed this "seed" onto their sons, "in order finally to bring the seeds of enlightenment to that degree of development in our race which is completely suitable to Nature's purpose." [Cosmo. p.416] Nature is both

that from which we differentiate ourselves, as human beings, and that purposive state towards which we must direct ourselves as a species.

The ideal of generation as progressive anthropomorphising concept so crucial to the event of enlightenment being--the passing on of pure uncontaminated (non-mutant) seed--moreover, must be understood as a task, as the work of man, and a work that he gives to himself (for the realization of his essence). "[H]e should work himself upward so as to make himself, through his own actions, worthy of life and of well-being." [Cosmo. p.417] Given the complex and internally competitive and antagonistic nature of man's natural tendencies however, this work is not readily undertaken but must be wrung from him under duress. It is providence that guarantees this by ensuring "that he be guided toward a civil constitution based on the principles of freedom, but at the same time [that] he expects that this constitution be based on a coercive principle of statutory equality." [A. p.245] And this because man has, on the one hand, a "propensity to enter society" [Cosmo. p.417], yet on the other is "bound with a mutual opposition which constantly threatens to break up the society" [Cosmo. p.418]. Man lives in society in a state of perpetual "antagonism" because of his fundamental "social unsociability".

The constant in Kant's analysis of the human condition in this respect is the propensity of man for entering into society and this, we are told, comes about because "in society he feels himself to be more than man". [Cosmo. p.418] It is this desire, we are told, that "awakens [mans] powers" bringing into being "the first true steps from barbarism to culture" [ibid]. In the Anthropology we are told that man "has a character which he himself creates, because he himself is capable of perfecting himself according to purposes which he himself adopts." [A. p.238] And here the birth, the auto-production of the man of politics (aptly described for these purposes as the political animal), for it is by way of his entering into society that man realizes (awakens) his powers and his desire to be more than man, here his work, in Kant's words, to be able to "conquer his inclination to laziness and, propelled by vainglory, lust for power and avarice, to achieve a rank among his fellows whom he cannot tolerate but from whom he cannot withdraw." [Cosmo. p.418]. It is here that culture develops and refines man, here that he takes his first faltering steps towards enlightenment and effects "thereby a change of society of men driven together by their natural feelings into a moral whole." A most apt place for the birth of morality. "Thus a society in which freedom under external laws is associated in the highest degree with irresistible power (re, a perfectly just civil constitution), is the highest problem Nature assigns for the human race."

Perhaps the most repellent, and at the same time, most telling aspect of the immaculate conception and labour of the new-born subject of enlightenment is his need for a master. As Kant tells us in the 6th thesis of the Cosmo, for man to live amongst others he needs to be domesticated<sup>10</sup>, to be held fast by a law-giveness that will prevent his "animal instincts" from destroying the very society into which (and by virtue of which ) he has been born as subject. Self-othering, as a practice of the domestication of desire, is thus the means by which man is prevented from breaking those rules he would give to others in order to create himself in his own image, the image or Idea of the community as communio in the one, the antagonistic same (identical).

Man "thus requires a master, who will break his will and force him to obey a will that is universally valid, under which each can be free." [Cosmo. p.418] Free for what? Free to be consolidated in that desire to be "more than man", yet separated, in this process of solidification, from what desire can do,<sup>11</sup> indeed we already know how this process begins. How to gain the voice of the universally valid command? Immaculate conception and a bag of nails!<sup>12</sup>

"The highest master should be just in himself, [yet strive as

he might for the status of and reality of internal law-giver]...its complete solution is impossible" [Cosmo. p.419] For, as Kant tells us, judiciously in a footnote...where else to find the Nazarene..."The role of man is very artificial". Everything by analogy: "Nature has planted in the species the seed of discord, and...Nature has willed the human species, through its reason, [to] turn discord into accord, or at least to create a constant approximation to it." Artificial culture in the practice of the Idea of community, the civil constitution of the state "represents the highest degree of artificial enhancement of the good characteristics in the human species [the] final purpose of its destiny." [A. p.245]

"Concord contains its purpose in its idea, whereas discord as action contains, within the plan of Nature, the means of supreme wisdom. This wisdom is to affect the perfection of man through cultural progress, even if this should mean sacrifice of the pleasures of his life." [A. p.238]

Here the pull of the sublime draws us. Sacrifice to the *Allgemeine Stimme/ung*, the universal voice; univocal harmony. Not in the melodic topography of a chaotic strange attractor, but in the one, sovereign space, unrepresentable within society, yet designated arena for communicability of the Idea. "The universal voice is only an idea" [CJ. #8], and the



*Einstimmung* or *Allgemeine Stimmung* is no more a social consensus made up of individual voices than it is a body-without-organs, its universality is subjective.<sup>13</sup> It is unity as promise, the harmonious linear combination of the faculties (constitution of the very possibility of a cognitive subject). The subject comes into being in the *Einstimmung*, in the univocity of the *sensus communis* which is the condition and actualization of its production.

*Einstimmung* is the voice of the Law (of coercive harmony/concord), the law that cannot dictate at the level of the aesthetic (which is only a relation), but its promise which, by its seepage into and analogous relation with morality (through the interest of reason), will give it the power of unspeakable sovereignty.<sup>14</sup> This voice speaks to and out of the subject that comes into existence with it, is co-extensive with it.

From the CJ we recall that:

"[T]he satisfaction in the beautiful, like that in the sublime, is not alone distinguishable from other aesthetic judgements by its universal communicability, but also because it acquires an interest through this very property in reference to society (in which communication is possible)."

[CJ. p.116]

Society provides for, but is not itself the space of universal communicability [*allgemeine mitteilbarkeit*] where the universal voice [*allgemeine Stimme*] gives the Law, the "ought" to itself.<sup>15</sup> Society is that which marks us in accordance with our acceptance of the necessity of the universal prescriptive, of this regulative idea of reason. The aim of society (in our supposed desire, if not in its inception) is the "unattainable idea" [A. p.247] of community, a regulative principle demanding that we yield generously toward it as the direction of our natural inclination.<sup>16</sup>

The exemplar of this societal marking (constitution of the subject beyond himself) is genius, for genius is publicly marked and its pain affords pleasure to others. The spectators watch its pain--the prime coding of socialization--with eyes and bodies already under contract and obligation, already socialized, and derive from the spectacle the surplus value of pleasure that shores up and legitimates the promise of (the possibility of) the sublime; of access to the ultimate pain, the void--noumenon, death, sovereignty, community--experienced through a perverse form of fraternity (in the brotherhood of Ideas).

In the CJ #20 and #21 of the "Analytic of the beautiful" we find that *Gemeinschaftlichen*, the feeling of community, is

that which lies at the basis of and grounds the possibility of a *Gemeinsinn*, a common sense. In the "Analytic of the Sublime" CJ #40 and #41 we are told that the feeling of community is something basic to the definition of a human being, a being possessing *sensus communis*, which is expressed through that which it brings about in the realization (the birth into) that which makes possible an approximation to its essence (the "more than man"), namely *Gesellschaft*, society. These assertions that found the aesthetic and merely reflective judgement, have no conceptual basis, but are rather felt in the pleasure of the free-play of the faculties (in the experience of the beautiful) and in the pain (and consequent pleasure) of the experience of the sublime.

The moves are as follows: For the non-cognitive aesthetic judgement to have necessity it must lay claim to the "idea of a common sense [*die Idee eines Gemeinsinnes*]" [CJ #20] and it is the presupposition of this idea that represents as objective the, in fact subjective (and exemplary) necessity of the judgement. [CJ #22] The aesthetic judgement thus has "a necessity of the assent of all to a judgement which is regarded as the example of a universal rule that we cannot state" [CJ #18], and the form of this agreement is that of an "ought". *Gemeinsinn* (common sense) is then a principle whose anticipation enables us to judge not according to concepts but by feeling. Moreover "this common sense is assumed...

simply as the necessary condition of the universal communicability of knowledge, which is presupposed in every logic and in every principle of knowledge that is not sceptical." [CJ #21] The mighty power of the "ought", universal communicability in the role of a thought police delimiting and legitimating the creativity of what can be felt and what can be known, these exemplify the power of domesticated imagination captured by the name (the essence) of Man.

The CJ presents us with the free and indeterminate accord of the faculties as an a priori harmony lying at the very basis of the subject.<sup>17</sup> This accord cannot be known intellectually but only felt, and it is felt, as has been said, in two ways: As the pleasure that results from the experience of the beautiful (imagination in its pure freedom in agreement with the understanding in its non-specified legality), and as the pain felt in the experience of the sublime. Aesthetic common sense (as opposed to the common sense of the intellect in the CPR) cannot represent an objective accord of the faculties, (in that it has no legislative power), thus the accord of the faculties must be spontaneously exercised. It is this aesthetic common sense that makes possible the common sense of the CPR by establishing an original *Einstimmung*, an attunement, which first makes possible the "I think" of the knowing subject.<sup>18</sup>

In the sublime, accord or harmony is only a secondary feeling however, the initial feeling is that of discord, where the imagination seems to lose its freedom by being forced by reason to unite the immensity of the sensible world into a whole, that is, into a presentable Idea thereof. It is only in the wake of this discord that accord ensues, as imagination, confronted by its limit goes beyond that limit and represents to itself the inaccessibility of the rational idea (as something itself present in sensible nature), the negative presentation of the infinite that "expands the soul". [CJ #29]

The feeling of a supersensible destination (even if this is only a negative and painful presentation) is the basis of the accord of reason and the imagination in the sublime. The possibility of articulating a "*more than man*" is projected in the form of the soul as the indeterminate supersensible unity of the faculties finding its seat in the *sensus communis*. This accord is then something engendered through the feeling of discord (and, as with the concord of man in the civil society, it is effected by means of the violence and coercion, of internally imposed law); a law of culture and destiny as the movement of its genesis, speculatively indeterminate perhaps, but practically determined through preparation and preparedness for the moral law.

In the sublime, aesthetic common sense is thus engendered, whereas in the beautiful it is rather assumed or anticipated. The interest of the beautiful--its relation to society as the place of the possibility of communication--is however, only empirical (a posteriori), and it is to that interest that is united with the beautiful--that is the Idea of community within a philosophy of nature--that we must look for its a priori principle.<sup>19</sup> The interest of reason, as that which is united with the beautiful does not bear upon its form as such, but is rather the content used by nature to produce objects capable of being reflected formally (ultimately reducible to prime matter, fluid substance). It is this interest of reason then (concerned as it is with the production of the beautiful in nature) that serves as a principle in us for a genesis of the feeling of the beautiful itself. What is produced is thus a contingent accord of nature with all our faculties together, of nature fortuitously adapted to the harmonious exercise of our faculties. Our rational interest lies in the contingent accord of nature's productions with our disinterested pleasure. Such accord is felt rather than cognized and whilst it is presented to the understanding, which it thereby excites, it is also related to the Ideas of reason which it awakens (and whose object is merely the analogue of the beautiful object perceived). It is then the Ideas of reason that are the objects of an indirect presentation in the free

materials of nature.

It is in this way that the interest united in the beautiful refers us to the accord of subjective harmony in the supersensible, this however, given the dominance of an already constituted faculty of reason. There is then an inescapable synthetic relation between the interest of the beautiful and the good, in the destiny of the human being to the moral sphere, to be more than man.

"[T]o take an immediate interest in the beauty of nature...is always a mark of a good soul; and...when this interest is habitual, it at least indicates a frame of mind favorable to the moral feeling if it is voluntarily bound up with the contemplation of nature." [CJ #42]

It now seems clear that the empirical connection between the universal communicability of the aesthetic judgement and the place of communication within society has in fact a priori status, this, at least so long as reason and the ends of man are bound to it to secure its legitimacy.

"Taste...is just that one [faculty] which most needs examples of what has in the *progress of culture* received the longest approval, that it may not become again uncivilized and return to the crudeness of its first essays." [CJ #32]

Culture is the ultimate end pursued by nature in the human race because culture is what makes men "susceptible to ideas", it is the condition that opens onto the thought of the unconditioned.

We are now perhaps better prepared to return to that place from whence we began in the CJ, #40, entitled "Of taste as a kind of *Sensus Communis*." Here Kant tells us that sense, properly understood, has not the least capacity for expressing universal rules, for such representations as truth, beauty or justice, we must "rise beyond sense to higher faculties of cognition." Within what "we regard as the least to be expected from anyone claiming the name of man", that is "the common understanding of men [*Der gemeine Menschenverstand*]" which is the "mere healthy (not yet cultivated) understanding", and is given the general name of a common sense [*Gemeinsinnes*] *sensus communis*, there is thereby included "the feeling of community [*gemeinschaftlichen*]", of the idea of community.

The presentation of this idea (which as the ends of man is never fully realizable) comes about through the coding of socialization, which (under the name of the event of Enlightenment) is prescribed in three maxims, the "maxims of human understanding", which Kant elucidates for us:

"(1) to think for oneself; [understanding]



(2) to put oneself in thought in

the place of everyone else; [judgement]

(3) always to think consistently." [reason]

These three maxims<sup>20</sup> clearly delineate the roles of the faculties in the pursuit of an Enlightenment project which refuses its own virtual status--society as "artificial enhancement" through the characteristics of the human species--resigning itself instead to a politics, a theology, that will maintain man within the confines of the tensile community. The contract is binding and there is an endless supply of nails.

"[H]uman nature does not of its own proper motion accord with the good, but only by virtue of the violence that reason exercises upon sensibility."

[CJ. p.124]

Insofar as Kant thinks community (*qua sensus communis*) by way of *communio*, his bequeathment to modern and postmodernist thought orientates desire around the concept of a lack or loss of the in-common (the vanishing point of the *focus imaginarius* held in place by the tensile structure of the human/animal in its compromised rationality). The movement of humanity, by way of its reason, towards harmony, is made possible only by way of the violence that reason exacts upon the productive imagination. Reason forces the imagination, by means of this violence, to accept its limits and its

inability to produce (to represent) the fully constituted object of the Ideas of reason, a failure that results in a feeling of insufficiency. This in turn produces a construction of community as the communion of humanity (aimed at full communication within the cosmopolitan society) in pursuit of a supersensible goal (a transcendental Ideal), as that which is both (supersensible) destiny and the reason for existence (which is by definition unattainable).

"Everyone expects and requires from everyone else this reference to universal communication as it were from an original (com)pact [Vertrage] dictated by humanity itself." [CJ. #42]

In this way then, a triple curse is cast upon desire: firstly, it is constituted as Lack in accordance with the unrepresentability of the Ideas of reason; secondly, the unrepresentability is guaranteed as the Ideas are made external, that is, they are posited as transcendently Ideal (supersensible substrate or noumenal) and thus capable, by definition, of only negative presentation; thirdly, desire in the real is confined to the satisfaction in the beautiful (in the harmony of the faculties), and in the feeling of pain and pleasure derived from the sublime in the repression of the imagination.

### 3. The "lost" community of Post-modernism.

Current (allegedly post-humanist) debates on community, reacting against a Kantian Enlightenment inheritance, locate traditional theories of community in a history of political philosophy, hermetically sealing these within the confines of the designation of *communio*. Such theories are then rebuked as totalizing (non-differentiating, non-emancipatory) constructions and a move is made towards thinking community on the basis of a dynamics of *commercium*. The motivation for this is to a large extent driven by feelings of guilt and failure (particularly in the face of names like "Auschwitz" and the aftermath of "May 68") and the consequent desire to accommodate minority groups in non-Absolutist political discourse that would expiate the consciences of those who still participate in an unsuccessful mourning for the death of Socialism and Communism in the West.

This process of mourning is rooted in a call to *Gemeinschaftlichen* [sense of community] which cannot ultimately, be disassociated from its Kantian foundations in the universal voice [*die allgemeine Stimme*] that is, the harmonious univocity or attunement (the *Stimmung*) of the *Sensus Communis*- the founding moment of the 'I think' as subject. The failure of this mourning is indicated by way of

the encystment of the *Stimme*,<sup>21</sup> of the dead universal subject which prevents the proposed dynamics of commercium from being communicated by any being other than the fully constituted subject (co-existent of *communio*), which is itself only an Idea.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the defensive hostility of many thinkers towards current developments in biotechnology, medicine, science and global marketplace economics, of patterns of ever more complex and in-human associations emerging in a counter-culture that has become high trans-multi-culture only further elaborates this encystment of the historico-political subject, dictating the limits and exclusivity of its communicability.

In his Preface to The Inoperative Community, Jean-Luc Nancy, despite having decried traditional theories of the subject and the "desire for consensus" implicit in their thought of community, its loss or lack, seems to take his place in the funeral cortege:

"One thing at least is clear: if we do not face up to such questions [of revolution], the political will soon desert us completely if it has not already done so. It will abandon us to political and technological economies, if it has not already done so. And this will be the end of our communities, if this has not yet come about. Being-in-common will nonetheless never cease to

resist, but its resistance will belong decidedly to another world entirely. Our world, as far as politics is concerned, will be a desert, and we will wither away without a tomb--which is to say, without community." [The Inoperative Community Preface]

This lament echoes the "problem" of Jean-Francois Lyotard's Differend: "to find, if not what can legitimate judgement (the 'good' linkage), then at least to save the honor of thinking." [Preface]. The proximity of "Being-in-common" to "the honor of thinking" recalls the Kantian demand for respect which entails, if not an ethical imperative, then at least a certain logic of esteem, of veneration and integrity; of that which is given as a given to *les tres honorable*, to his honor the judge, that is, the encysted universal subject (of the Kantian lawgiver). This is the regulation of and by a community founded upon a historical inheritance of resistance to immanence and antagonism to Nature as Same-Other, that cannot escape resurrecting or re-birthing the thought of the subject as the site of justice and ideational contestation.

The postmodern ethico-political subject<sup>23</sup> is not however identical with its historical forebears, but is construed in the light of structuralist and post-structuralist models of exchange. It is a subject that is both constituted and

disassembled or dislocated in its historical specificity. Before elaborating further however, it is worth looking back once again to the subject whose birth concurred with the sense of community constituted out of Lack, this time formulated explicitly by way of social contract theory. This exposition is performed in order to trace the structure of inheritance and encystment that pervades theories of the postmodern community prescribing a particular relation to Kantian critique and precluding advancement into the terrain of the post-human.

Hobbesian conceptions of the body politic tend to consider the community in essentialist or organicist terms with all of its constituent parts absorbed into a wholeness or Oneness of the social body. In such theories, the body is ruled by the head under which its members are subsumed and the whole is taken to precede its parts. Enlightenment social contract theory, on the other hand, sees the community as being formed out of a *mutual* indebtedness (bond and obligation), these theories assume some prior constitution of freely determining subjects aggregating to form a community, whereby the part is already a whole before its encounter with other parts. (Extreme versions of these theories are to be found in fascism and possessive individualism respectively.) What both theories have in common is that they position the subject as an organizing category prior to any relation. Each operates

in such a way as to either reduce or wholly eliminate social difference, the result being an overwhelming sense of loss, of the feeling of what it is that is constituted in and by community.

Johannes Althusius<sup>24</sup>, in his Politica Methodice Digesta [1603] was the first thinker to speak of politics as a science of symbiotics, positing association through contract as its fundamental category. He was also the first, however, to strictly delineate association into the realms of the public and the private. Private association being where individual men covenant among themselves in respect of family and trade, professional and other civil associations. Public association resulting from the linking together of many private associations to form an inclusive political order. This distinction bred further, now traditional disjunctions, including the separation of public associations into the particular and universal, Michael Less noff explains:

"Families and collegia...unite to form...a community, a category which embraces hamlets, villages, towns and cities. These are particular public associations, constituted by 'fixed laws', and their members are not individuals but private associations...Universal public authority - the realm, commonwealth or people - consists of a number of provinces and cities, united by a 'tacit

or express promise' in which they bind themselves 'to hold, organize, use and defend...the law of the realm'. Thus a people is constituted, with its own law, and capable of contracting with a future ruler. But the terms of that future contract [and indeed all contracts after the original one] are already determined by the prior contract by which the realm and its law, were instituted. It is the people that are sovereign, and the ruler is only their supreme magistrate, charged with administering the laws of association."

[Lessenoff. p.37]

Despite debacles (from Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau and Kant on to Rawls and beyond) as to the historical reality, ideality or hypotheticality of the original contract (and the tacit consent assumed of future generations), along with the right of resistance relating to the positioning of inviolable rights (as pre- or post-political), the birth of community in the configuration of a full or whole body held together by associations that are not themselves reducible to the couplings of body parts, has operated as the glossy surface upon which the various permutations of social contract theory have reflected and legitimated the vision of the fully constituted subject lending to man his legislative and juridical authority.



The implicit assumption - the ghost in the mirror - is the redemptive figure of the Nazarene in the spirit of Christianity; morality as binding categorical imperative, the immaterial bond of association (promise, debt, obligation, duty) that has glued together partial and diverse forces of humanity into the single image of the social community as adolescent Body Politic.

Thomas Carlyle in Sartor Resartus (over 200 years after Althusius) writes:

"[I]f government is, so to speak, the outward SKIN of the Body Politic, holding the whole together and protecting it; and all your Craft-Guilds and Associations for Industry, of hand or head, are the Fleishy Clothes, the muscular and osseous tissues (lying under such SKIN), whereby society stands and works; - then is Religion the innermost Pericardial and Nervous Tissue, which ministers Life and warm Circulation to the whole. Without which Pericardial Tissue, the Bones and Muscles (of Industry) were inert, or animated only by a Galvanic Vitality; the SKIN would become a shrivelled pelt, or a fast-rotting raw-hide; and Society itself a dead carcass, - deserving to be buried." [Sartor Resartus Bk III. p.172]

Life is blown into the multiplicity in the form of the sticky ectoplasm of moral association and promise of the coming

community.<sup>25</sup>

Whilst Locke, Hobbes and Rousseau establish civil society by providing for centralized government (differentiating it from the State of nature by way of the latter's absence of Power [Hobbes] or Judge [Locke]), it is the myth of obligation to the whole - spirit glue or *sensus-in-common* (most fully explicated by Kant and the sons of Enlightenment Humanism) which permeates their contracts and institutes the image of the community as semi-divine social body and subject.

As the sketch of the universal subject<sup>26</sup> or ghost in the mirror is fleshed out however, the fully integrated subject born of it is confronted with only partially constituted others, that is, with (social or machinic) difference. Such partial (or schizophrenic) images instead of forming determinate parts of the reflection, begin to scatter and reformulate themselves in ever more perverse forms for which no blueprint can be located. The unity of man is shattered and the *Gemeinschaftlichen* becomes orientated around a sense of lack or loss. (Thus the lucrative business of Freudian damage limitation in the form of Oedipus.) This is the loss that results from the myth of a prior or original unity, the unity whose glue was not strong enough to prevent the mutation and spontaneous emergence of demons occurring alongside the birth of an individuated 'whole' and

'psychically integrated' subject. Lyotard refers to this sketch of the subject in his essay on the *sensus communis*, whereby:

"A subjectivity hears itself from far off and intimately at the same time, in this frail and singular unison, the subject is being born, but it will never be born as such. Once born, the subject is only the *Ich denke*."

[Who Comes after the Subject? p.133]

Theories purporting to bring into being a fully constituted subject, in requiring the collapse of both transcendent (Noumenal) and empirical (experiential) subjectivity into the space of the transcendental, merely project a space for the coming subject who can, by definition, never arrive.

The texts of social contract theory, rather than describing the dynamic commercium of community in the real, limit such community

within the bounds of a political or juridical authority abstracted from or constituted by means of the myth of the full body and the desire (through lack) of a reformulated subject yet to arrive. The unity constituted in this secondary process of socialization through the construction of the community as civil society of individuated subject-citizens is then taken as a re-formation (and reformulation)

of that prior (pre-subjective) unity, the redemption of original community. In this sense both body politic and social contract theories in being founded upon the thought of community as (lost) *communio* are indebted to the redemptive narrative of Christianity. Georges Van Den Abbeele notes:

"Consensus, communism, and communion, [are] subtended by a myth of immanence that would explain their coming into being as but the unravelling or disclosing of what already is, the underlying com-unis whose full revelation awaits the Second Coming, the Revolution, or the compromise of consensus." [Abbeele. The Community at Loose Ends Introduction]

In postmodernity (advanced or late Capitalism) constructions of community based around or regressing towards totalizing structures of *communio* have become evermore mystical as a result of the serial killings of God, history and metaphysics, culminating in the death of the classical subject as organizing principle of transcendence. It is the demise of this last and its inseparability from the disintegration of private/public and inner/outer distinctions, that have resulted in the collapse of the categories of particularity and universality and demanded a move towards a more radical thinking of singularity.

It is largely as a result of the privileging of singularity particularly in respect of Levi-Straussian exchange models that current theorists of community have succeeded in escaping from positing the centrality of the fully constituted historical subject as the measure or mediator of commercium. As the subject is dispersed and dispossessed of his identity, his politics, ethics and theology are consigned to ashes, to be scattered upon the corpse of the transcendental subject. What has emerged out of Exchange models of society however, is a thinking that binds itself to rituals and the rapture of commemoration, of 'crisis' and mourning; a thinking that forces the possibility of commercium back within the categorical framework of a metaphysics of existence and an ontology of Man.

The community is born-again, no longer on the theatrical stage, but this time within the format of the soap opera; its sensus communis elaborated in a series of (non-interactive) written or viewed tasks, advertised in the titillating titles: "the inoperative community", "the unavowable community", "the community at loose ends"; each episode promising new forms of horror and alienation. Abbeele, in his introduction to The community at loose ends writes:

"impersonality, anonymity, and solitude are the lot of a modern community crowded into ever-expanding urban conglomerates,... the very bonds

of social interaction are sundered by the multifarious dislocations, disruptions, and disappropriations that characterize life in postindustrial societies." [Abbeele. The Community at Loose Ends. Intro]

To refuse one's invite to the funeral party mourning beside the grave of a father who, never having been born, can never be successfully commemorated, requires that we incinerate our boxes of man-sized tissues. Man has been more radically re-configured in relation to nature in our century than in any other: He is becoming other-than and not more-than man, he is turning away from representation and learning the art of simulation, an art that 'Woman' has practiced on the surface of and behind the matrix and the mirror (the *focus imaginarius*) since her inception as logical function of Otherness (both sacred and profane) in metaphysics. If humanity is not to be obliterated by the community that has no time for its progress and destiny, then it has to learn the practices of becoming-post-human. It has to learn that the only thing that it has "in common" is the ability to become. It is time for us to re-map, re-spatialize and re-think desire, and push community, force and life into the realm of the post-human. To make such a move necessitates that we relinquish the Kantian dream of being "more than man", that we de-essentialize not just the thought of the

subject, but also of that destiny, that telos of community that designates his time of birth and place of death.

In his Preface to the Inoperative Community, Nancy asserts that "the political is the place where community is brought into play". The playground, or space, as a "dimension of the 'in-common'" does not occur in relation to a subject, nor is the subject its product. Nancy tells us that "being self", is "co-originary and co-extensive with it". Insofar as "being self" can be equated with the deferred originality of the I (and the reflexive aesthetic I) of Kantian critique, we can trace the lineage from the CJ where this being emerges in relation to the space of the in common as *sensus communis* logically prior to any attempt to conceptualize the transcendental unity of apperception.<sup>27</sup>

For such post-Kantian thinkers it should not be thought that this space of the political is simply "one political place among others", it is rather, suggestive of that nothingness to which Lyotard refers in the Differend:

"politics is not at all a genre, it bears witness to the nothingness which opens up with each occurring phrase and on the occasion of which the differend between genres of discourse is born."

[Lyotard The Differend p.199]

In "bearing witness" however, a certain ability to connect, to link onto (to listen into) the Stimme (the harmonious voice) of community is assumed (and stratification is evoked if not encrypted). Nancy claims that he is writing from a "definite political determination...from the left...[this meaning] at the very least, that the political, as such, is receptive to what is at stake in community (On the other hand, 'right' means, at least, that the political is merely in charge of order and administration)". Order and power relations are placed in the sphere of politics as genre (juridical, administrative, etc.) and equated with the birth of the subject (the determination of a being self). The notion of force however is separated off from this production and even from the political as such, the political, being that which, as metadiscourse, allows one to bear witness, or to pose the possibility of a differend, without itself being that space or nothingness.

With this in mind it is possible, desirous even, to understand community (in terms of what is at stake) as a space of possible linkage - a flow of force(s). The community thought as *sensus communis* would then be a pre-judgement of the place in which community may arrive (where linkage occurs - and it is always occurring, now), for the *sensus* allocates it a seat or territory (by way of and in relation to the birth of the subject).



The play of forces in the *coming* community (of those with nothing in common) then precedes any right/left political distinction and the formulation of a logos; exceeding a metaphysics of the subject, in the play of the dynamic nonlinear interweaving of forces.

"But there would be no power relations, nor would there be such a specific unleashing of power (there would be merely a mechanics of force), if the political were not the place of community -- in other words, the place of a specific existence, the existence of a being-in-common, which gives rise to the existence of being-self."

[Nancy. The Inoperative Community. Introduction.]

Against this 'mere mechanics of forces' (where mechanics is just the name for the recording, channeling and regulating of coded flows), Nancy posits an "in-common" which gives rise to the singular being rather than being co-originary with it. In this sense, it is the emergence of order from the mere play of forces, already determined as in-common, that produces singular being as a being that is dislocated in its sharing of the in-common.<sup>28</sup> The 'specificity' of this being - its existence - in terms of stability and identity consists only in the space of anticipated linkage, so long as the space of its ordering and empowering (its being in power relations) remains immanent to it. An immanence which, for Nancy, can

only be secondary in relation to the transcendence (the unrepresentability) of the space of the political.

Denying the viability of this transcendental self-othering of the subject requires that one not simply refuse a role to politics (in the sense given), but recognize that politics and the political become indistinguishable as a means of judging or determining the operation of encrypting codes for social organization, whereby the play of forces becomes synonymous with its emergence into order. As Brian Arthur points out, "the political system isn't some exogenous thing that stands outside the game [it] is actually an outcome of the game - the alliances and coalitions that form as a result of it." [Complexity. p.332] For post-human desire, insofar as the self is always in a state of becoming (-woman, -machine, -animal, -alien, etc.), we can follow Donna Haraway in stating that "the cyborg is our ontology, it gives us our politics" [Simians, Cyborgs and Women p.191] and it does so by being party to inclusive rather than exclusive disjunctions. The cyborg defies categories of finitude, alterity and generation - it is not subject to (bound by) politics, but simulates it.

In this way, the political can be viewed as a way of linking that attempts to give meaning in advance to the space in which community may arrive, in terms of an exposure of a

dislocated in-common. The task that both Nancy and Lyotard set themselves is to "bear witness" to community, to the differend, to "the interruption of singularities, or the suspension that singular beings are." [Nancy The Inoperative Community p.31] And thus it is for both a political project.

"Politics...is the threat of the differend. It is not a genre, it is the multiplicity of genres, the diversity of ends, and par excellence the question of linkage. It plunges into the emptiness where "it happens that..." ...Politics consists in the fact that language is not a language, but phrases, or that Being is not being but *There is's*. It is tantamount to Being which is not. It is one of its names... Everything is political if politics is the possibility of the differend on the occasion of the slightest linkage." [Lyotard The Differend p.138-9]

But this cannot be asserted whilst Nancy claims that "community ... is given to us with being and as being", as "the sacred stripped of the sacred" [The Inoperative Community p.35]. Resistance to immanence is itself transcendent in claiming the status of metadiscourse that allows it to judge its own space of arrival. Lyotard, at the end of the Differend seems to recognize this problem when he remarks, "the occurrence doesn't make a story...You can't make a political 'program' with it, but you can bear witness

to it. -- And what if no one hears the testimony, etc. -- Are you prejudging the *Is it happening?*" [The Differend p.181]

Community, for the like of Nancy, and arguably in the case of Lyotard, is not a play of forces but entails participation in propriety, in a justice that requires the "exposition" and the "sharing" of a logos.<sup>29</sup> The work of logos moreover, tends towards the assigning to community a "common being", despite Nancy's claim that:

"Being *in* has nothing to do with communion, with a fusion into the body, into a unique and ultimate identity that would no longer be exposed. Being *in* common means, to the contrary, *no longer having, in any form, in any empirical or ideal place, such a substantial identity, and sharing this* (narcissistic) '*lack of identity*'." [Nancy The Inoperative Community Preface]

Sharing in this lack (the sharing out of lack) is not associated with the celebration or commemoration of a lost communal fusion (whether real, ideal or hypothetical) in the common body. Rather, it is a task, a task of triple mourning in the face of the experience of finitude as that which it is impossible to make a work out of (whether as resurrection or burial). The community is not a project of recovering an experience of concealed immanence, it is not a work of death,

absolute or individual. Yet it is a task, a response to a historical narrative, a reactive sensus in which communal fusion is encysted by way of this unsuccessful triple mourning ("the death of the other...my birth...and my death")<sup>30</sup>.

The historically informed encystment of finitude, the schematization of the classical subject, binds not only the political, but the body of the singular being: "Community...is what happens to us - question, waiting, event, imperative - in the wake of society." [ibid] This wake is also the funeral wake of humanity, but one that Nancy does not bring to a close, despite having earlier informed us that:

"the community presupposed as having to be one of human beings presupposes that in effect, or that it must effect, as such and integrally, its own essence, which is itself the accomplishment of the essence of humanness." [The Inoperative Community p.3]

Community is still (s)cited as a "community of existence", and in his paper "Being in Common", Nancy states explicitly, "I am here bracketing out the question of whether to extend 'existence' to all beings or only to certain of them such as people, animals and so forth." [p.1]. This then follows on

from his assertion in the Inoperative community that "community means...that there is no singular being without another singular being and that there is what might be called, in a rather inappropriate idiom, an original or ontological 'sociality'." [Preface] Inappropriate indeed. Singular being, as a response and reaction to the failure of a metaphysics of the subject to appropriate that finitude which exceeds it, continues to privilege a *Stimmung* in the death-knell of that like-subject.<sup>31</sup>

Nancy, along with other quasi-Kantian sons of the Schematism, poses community in crisis in the face of the new "imperialisms" of "techno-economics". Verena Conley, in the collection Community at loose ends suggests an alternative view, "perhaps there is no crisis, no resolution and no destiny, only a trembling, an agitation in the wind, and the question would be less that of a gap than of a continuous linking, unlinking, in a movement, and of a (non-) communal: qu'est-ce nous agite?" [Community at Loose Ends p.69. Quote amended].

The social body, of the body politic and social contract theory is the body of secondary processes (premised upon the myth of an originary transcendental unity, real, ideal or hypothetical). In our era - having cut the umbilical cord to the Humanist universal body without suturing the ends - there

is proffered an alternative to the celebration, commemoration and mourning over this unburied corpse, namely, the anorganic or orgasmic body of libidinal economy, defined not by its constitutive organization, but by its states, (its trembling). Community as the commercium upon this undifferentiated body involves processes of excitation conducted through codes and patterns of intensity (where socialization is the marking and being marked through linkage, de- and re-codification).

The anorganic body is no more subsumable under the exchangist model of society than it is under Hobbesian body politic or the Lockian social contract. De-codified flows do not become properties or belongings of a privatized subject, for in advanced capitalism there is no reconstitution of parts dispersed across a social field, but rather a freeing up of them for ever more diverse couplings and linkages in extension, elaboration and transformation. There is a problem with this body however, for in separating itself off from the project of Humanist Enlightenment (where the theory of Humanism and the event of Enlightenment thought are deemed inseparable), it runs the risk of being bled of all measure of critical thought, becoming just another exercise in postmodern apocalypse banality. A fuller exposition of this point will be returned to in the chapter on ethics and life.

There is no need to protect or save community in the name of justice, for as Al Lingis points out, "The sense of justice is the sense that certain couplings...are right...The tourist's aging white throat and the knife in the [Brazilian] adolescents fist, for example." [Lingis. Unpublished work] There is no subject accredited with moral being--being there--by rational communitarianism. To 'be there' as a whole, is an ethical demand, a demand to be responsible, to answer for what one sees, and says and does, in terms of which being a member of society means to exist and act under accusation.

Society is becoming-schizophrenic. The notion of an integrated 'being there' is no longer dissociable from the alienated body, of man estranged from both the instruments and resources of his work and from the fruits of his labour, as well as from his own body-parts, forcing him to sell his arms, his back, his brain, his imagination. The two are indissociable because it is the notion of alienation that invokes the notion of the integral man who would belong to himself, possess his own body parts, his own imagination whims and will. These dreams of alienation and integration are more than ever finding themselves confronted with a reality where parts are no longer parts of a full body (a body that is 'mine'), but are always interchangeable.<sup>32</sup> What is sold in prostitution models of capitalist society is always 'oneself' and yet there is no self that is not an



interchangeable part. Lingis again:

"There is no longer any oneself involved...Or rather there is a self but it is another: the client does not just want wet meat to masturbate against, he wants a Brazilian mulatta, a Parisian tart, and it is these selves that organize the kisses, caresses, lubrications, and discharges and materialize in them. The young law-school graduate gives over his intelligence, his imagination, his thespian skills, his cordiality to the company, and there forms a self that answers for the things seen, said, and done for the company. Another self that may form, after hours, on week-ends, finds itself more and more absorbed into the self that was sold to the company." [Lingis. Unpublished work]

Is not this space, this non-place of othering-self-other the prescribed abode of Woman? Is this not that demarcated zone on the boundary of subjectivity where the concept of Woman has been used to practice the art of simulation through generations of a time she has been outside of? If this is her simulation however, it cannot be absorbed (as is the law student's), and yet it may be appropriated by those who would bring into being a seductive vista of community-in-crisis, a unified schizophrenia for the consumer 90's. The necessity of

examining in depth the concept of Woman in the light of this assertion is clear. This task must however be postponed a little, for in order to understand the significance of its role for the postmodern subject, we must first come to a better understanding of that which it is being appropriated in order to replace.

## Notes

1. In the Observations, Kant says of woman, "they contain the chief cause in human nature for the contrast of the beautiful qualities with the noble, and they refine even the male sex." [p.77-8] Yet these beautiful qualities are exemplary of woman's essence only insofar as she is defined in relation to man's destiny. "The principle object is that the man should become more perfect as a man, and the woman as a wife." [p.95] The essence of woman is made non-threatening in its reciprocal (reflective) organization. Woman is culturally constructed, and it is man's role to "cultivate their [women's] beautiful nature." [p.79-80]

2. Habermas, in Legitimation Crisis quotes P. Berger on the chaotic nature of reality: "Men are congenitally compelled to impose a meaningful order upon reality. This order, however, presupposes the social enterprise of ordering world-construction...The ultimate danger of such separation [from society] however, is the danger of meaninglessness. This danger is the nightmare par excellence, in which the individual is submerged in a world of disorder, senselessness and madness." [Legitimation Crisis p.118]

Habermas himself then goes on to remark "The fundamental function of world-maintaining interpretive systems is the avoidance of chaos, the overcoming of contingency... contingencies of an imperfectly controlled environment could be processed simultaneously with the fundamental risks of human existence." [ibid p.118-9]

3. Schizophrenia is being used here in a Deleuzian sense, as that which demands a practice of schizoanalysis. Mark Seem explains schizoanalysis thus: "A schizoanalysis schizophrenizes in order to break the holds of power and institute research into a new collective subjectivity and

revolutionary healing of mankind. For we are sick, so sick, of our selves!" [Anti-Oedipus p.xxi]

4. Life tends to be categorized by the bio-sciences in terms of its being wet or dry, natural or artificial. The competing definitions in these areas will be examined at length in section 19, but for the present a provisional outline will suffice: i) The essence of life lies in process, not physical structure. ii) Since the process is the essence, the medium in which the process occurs is merely a matter of convenience. iii) The self-organizing aspect of life is a consequence of a natural law or laws and should operate in any system of comparable complexity.

5. This "coming" is not to be thought of temporally in relation to a linear progression of past-present-future, but as a collapse of the transcendental into immanence.

6. It is *sensus communis* that grounds the very possibility of Taste, indeed "taste [is] a kind of *sensus communis*". [CJ #42]

7. Humanism covers a wide range of views based upon a belief in the power of human agency in history. The principle shared assumptions of these views are: i) The belief that human beings (as a universal category) have a potential value in and of themselves and that it is respect for this potential which is the source of all other human values and rights. Communication (*qua sensus communis*) reason (rationality) and adherence to human moral law in freedom of choice and action are the usual contents of this potential. ii) A rejection of any theories with nihilistic tendencies. A rejection of theories placing the foundation of value outside the human condition. A rejection of materialism and other proclamatory

determinist or reductionist accounts of consciousness.

8. "[M]an as an animal endowed with the capacity of reason (*animal rationabile*) can make himself a rational animal (*animal rationale*). On these grounds he first preserves himself and his species; secondly, he trains, instructs and educates his species for social living; thirdly, he governs the species as a systematic whole (arranged according to principles of reason) which belong to society." [Anthropology. p.238]

9. Both Kant and Genet make explicit the fundamentally unsociable nature of the human animal. This is then held in tension with their inclination toward brotherhood; for Kant, through the necessity of socialization to achieve a moral destiny; for Genet, through criminality in the pursuit of the unethical.

10. The notion of domestication referred to here is not that of sheep but rather of bees or ants: "Man was not meant to belong to a herd like the domesticated animals, but rather, like a bee, to belong to a hive community. It is necessary for him always to be a member of a civil society." [A. p.247]

11. Desire is not a projection towards this "more than man" for it does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is, rather, the *subject* that is missing in desire, or desire that lacks a fixed subject.

12. This need not be the story of the Nazarene, though that tale is perhaps its ideal epistle. In a contemporary case: "David shook, and willed himself not to shake. Every needle blazed. Every needle froze. The skin around the piercing's

heated and swelled. The rest of his skin was clammy and cold. And she was perfect, in front of him, her face a bestial mask of sadistic lust. Lena was masturbating at the spectacle of his willing vulnerability, the suffering he offered up to her, the bleeding wounds he had held still for her to make, and allowed her to bind. He wanted...everything. Consumption. To be used, to be used up completely. To be absorbed into her eyes, her mouth, her sex, to become part of her substance." [Califia. Melting Point p.108]

13. The necessity that is thought in an aesthetic judgement is exemplary, being neither derived from concepts nor inferred from the universality of experience. It is "a necessity of the assent of all to a judgement which is regarded as the example of a universal rule that we cannot state." [CJ. p.74] This requirement of universal judgement takes, however, the form of an "ought", that is, it has at its basis a subjective principle determining what pleases or displeases in respect of feeling (not a concept), which possesses universal validity. We can thus make a firm distinction between *Gemeinsinn* thought of (i) as common understanding where one judges by concepts; (ii) as a principle through which one judges by feeling. It is this latter as both the (presupposed) condition and as the product of pure aesthetic feeling in the judgement of taste that gives it its necessity: "It is only under the presupposition that there is common sense (by which we do not understand an external sense, but the effect resulting from the free play of our cognitive powers)...that the judgement of taste can be laid down." [CJ. #19]

14. The aesthetic judgement, in having no (determinate) concept for its use, is unable to occupy a realm but it must make do with a field, and this determined reflectively (that

is, to a second degree),

"not by the commensurability between a presentation and a concept, but by the indeterminate commensurability between the capacity for presenting and the capacity for conceptualizing. This commensurability is itself an Idea, its object is not directly presentable. It results from this, that the universality invoked by the beautiful and the sublime is merely an *Idea of community*, for which no proof, that is, no direct presentation, will ever be found, but only indirect presentations."

[Lyotard. Political Writings. p.168]

In the dynamical antinomy of taste, the thesis states that the universality of the beautiful requires a consensus identical to the one obtainable for the true; the antithesis, that there is no concept corresponding to aesthetic presentation and therefore that there can be no consensus of that kind, and hence, no universality. The solution to this antinomy resides in the claim that there must be ~~x~~ present a "feeling" possessed even by those in dissent, for otherwise they would not be able to disagree. This feeling is the bond of "communicability" which maintains itself as a feeling whilst at the same time attempting to transform itself into an explicit consensus over what motivates it, namely, the Idea of the beautiful.

"The phrase of taste is a phrase in suspense or in suspension onto which each of the interlocutors links in a heterogeneous way, but a phrase whose sense each ought to try to formulate completely. Communicability is thereby required "as a duty so to speak" [#40] and taste is the faculty that judges it a priori." [ibid. p.169]

In this sense then, the role of the *sensus communis* in aesthetical judgement functions as an appeal to community

carried out a priori and judged without rule of direct presentation. But where in the case of ethics and moral obligation, community is required by the mediation of a concept of reason, the Idea of freedom; in the aesthetic of the beautiful it is called forth immediately without mediation (of concepts or sensations) but by feeling alone, insofar as this feeling can be shared a priori. Thus community is already present as taste, but not yet as rational consensus.

15. It is because of the "ought" of the aesthetical judgement that this judgement has exemplary validity and cannot be grounded upon experience. It is "a mere *ideal* norm, under the supposition of which I have a right to make into a *rule* for everyone a judgement that accords therewith" [CJ. p.76] The principle of assent is "subjectively universal...and thus can claim universal assent (as if it were objective) provided we are sure that we have correctly subsumed [the particulars] under it." [ibid] Such surety is the result of the internalization of a certain terror of the power of reason, a terror that is more powerful than any experienced in nature, and with which we are able to mutilate ourselves. It is this internalization of terror and its basis in the higher realms of the moral law that are produced in the feeling of the sublime.

16. Our initiation into society takes the form of a contractual agreement, it is not simply an attachment to the closed plenum of the transcendental body. We partake in a mimetic relation with the supersensible (as prescribed by law) through a reciprocal relation with nature (seen as mediator between man and the divine). Our markings, as distinct from those of savage societies, express ideas and are profoundly related to the voice [*Stimme*]. They do not



express a dexterity of the hands but a mastery of "dead and learned languages" [CJ #47] inspired anew to life by the aesthetic ideas passed on to us by the divine through the workings of a (purposive) nature that we cannot comprehend. The mark of the poet is not his signature but the very production of his labour which stretches his being out (martyring him by way of his imagination) between the poles of animal existence and the purveyor of the regulative idea of reason. Entering into society meaning signing and abiding by the contract of self-inclined-mutilation.

17. Lyotard puts it thus: "The *sensus communis* as unanimity about the beautiful, unanimity required and promised in each singular aesthetic judgement, is the witness or the sign (and not the proof) 'at the heart of'...subjectivity, the witness or sign of an Idea that relates itself to this subjectivity and that legitimates this requirement and this promise." [Lyotard. Sensus Communis p.230]

18. In the CPR the *I* can never present or properly anticipate itself as it is always in some sense behind itself on its self-knowledge in that such knowledge requires a determinative synthesis. In the aesthetic experience of the CJ however, there is no determination, the synthesis is rather reflexive and does not presuppose a prior unity, it is only ever a singular incidence of unison that can be neither prepared for nor forestalled. The heterogeneous faculties that are brought into play in the aesthetic state of mind are never homogenized but play together as one in harmony. Should the understanding succeed in recuperating the forms (of the aesthetic occasion) intellectually, it can only do so by way of introducing the determinative mechanism of the schematism, in which case the experience is no longer aesthetic but intellectual (as the form moves into a space where it has

already been prepared for; its parameters determined by the categories), and punctuated by the temporality of a transcendental unity of apperception.

19. "[I]t is not the pleasure, but the universal validity of this pleasure, perceived as mentally bound up with the mere judgement of upon an object, which is represented a priori in a judgement of taste as a universal rule for the judgement [to say] that I perceive and judge an object with pleasure. But it is an a priori judgement [to say] that I find it beautiful, i.e. I attribute this satisfaction to everyone....If we could assume that the mere universal communicability of a feeling must carry in itself an interest for us with it (which, however, we are not justified in concluding from the character of a merely reflective judgement), we should be able to explain why the feeling in the judgement of taste comes to be imputed to everyone as a duty." [CJ. #37]

But this, as Kant says, is something we cannot do, firstly, because to invest the *sensus communis* with an interest would be to give it a conceptual basis, and to do so would be to prevent it from being able to excite the understanding into play (the understanding being already in action); secondly, and more importantly, it would not be possible because we are here dealing with a secondary process. The primary process, that is the primary repression of the productive imagination that constructs the underlying notion of community (as lack) and that dishes out the morally prescriptive "ought", cannot be accessed other than indeterminately. At this level of *sensus communis* we can speak only of communication, society and culture. Existence comes after taste.

20. In more detail these maxims run as follows: (1) To think for oneself, to have unprejudiced thought; Enlightenment,

clear-sightedness; Understanding. The maxim of "unprejudiced" thought is that of a never passive reason (as distinct from superstition, a blindness in which one "represents nature as not subject to the rules that the understanding places at its basis by means of its own essential law." [CJ #40]). Enlightenment is deliverance from superstition, unprejudiced thought is "that bare negative which properly constitutes enlightenment" [CJ #40ff]. (2) To be in the thought of others, to have enlarged thought, to think from a universal standpoint; Judgement. Enlarged thought stands in opposition to narrowmindedness (limited thought), "whose talents attain to no great use (especially as regards intensity)" [ibid]. A man of enlarged thought is able to disregard the subjective private conditions of his own judgement and reflect from a universal standpoint (from nowhere) which he attains by way of placing himself in the place of others. (3) To think consistently, to have consecutive thought. This comes about from the combination of (1) and (2) in "habit". Its faculty is that of reason; it is the ability to think for oneself and (yet) to do so from a universal standpoint.

21. Encystment is a term relating to the process of unsuccessful mourning as described by Freud (and Derrida). In successful mourning there is a gradual withdrawal of investment from the dead one and a becoming free of them. In unsuccessful mourning, the disinvestment is sudden and entails an incorporation of the dead one in the form of encystment. The encysted dead one (usually the parent) survives in the interior crypt of the living mourner who is then (himself) swallowed up through a process of exteriorization.

22. As Lyotard remarks in reference to the *sensus communis* of the Critique of Judgement:

"The *sensus communis*...remains a hypotyposis: it is a sensible analogue of the transcendental euphony of the faculties, which can be only the object of an Idea, and not of intuition. This *sensus* is not a sense, and the sentiment that is supposed to affect it...is not common, but only in principle communicable. There is no assignable community of sentiment, no affective consensus in fact. And if we claim to have recourse to one, or a fortiori to create one, we are victims of a transcendental illusion and we are encouraging impostures." [Who Comes after the Subject p.233]

23. There is no firm distinction drawn in this writing between the modern and postmodern subject. Both modes of thought can and often do refer to the same notion of subjectivity in crisis, however, where the modern theory of the subject might cling on to some notion of possible progress and development, its postmodern heir is either already dispersed to the point of irrecoverable or is on a perpetual suicide binge.

24. Althusius organized his Politics according to Ramist logic (based on Peter Ramus' logic of invention and disposition [judgement]). Its general principle was that the matter of organization of political science be in accord with the maintenance of social life among men (ie. in terms of justice, truth and method). He states that: "Politics is the art of associating men for the purpose of establishing, cultivating and conserving social life among them. Whence it is called 'sympiotics'." [quoted in Less noff p.xix]

25. The theme of spirit performs the circulatory role binding moral association, as when Kant claims that "spirit...is the animating principle in the mind" [CJ p.157], and again,

elsewhere, that "spirit is the animating principle in a person" [A p.124].

26. cf. Lyotard. "Sensus Communis" in Who Comes after the Subject. p.232.

27. Nancy claims that consciousness and communication, as ecstasy, is never 'mine', but that I have it only in and through community. "[I]t is not an unconscious - that is to say it is not the reverse side of the subject, nor its splitting. It has nothing to do with the subjects structure as a *self*; it is clear consciousness at the extremity of its clarity, where consciousness of self turns out to be outside the self of consciousness. Community, which is not a subject, does not have or possess this consciousness; community is the ecstatic consciousness of the night of immanence insofar as such a consciousness is the interruption of self-consciousness." [The Inoperative Community p.19]

28. Exposition through sharing and dislocation are Kantian predicables of the category of community. In the CPR, it is stated that there belongs to each of the categories pure derivative concepts - predicables - which (although Kant refuses to deal with them at any length) are named, for the category of community, as being those of "presence" and "resistance".

29. Justice, in this sense, is just another name for morality experienced as solidarity. Thus society maintains itself within a structure of fundamentally interpersonal relationship with morality as its regulative principle.

30. "Only the community can present me with my birth and along with it the impossibility of my reliving it, as well as

the impossibility of my crossing over into my death." [Nancy The Inoperative Community p.15]

31. Nancy revivifies the movement of internalization through a thinking of alterity, calling for a "thinking of community in the proper sense...shared between Daseins, between singular existences that are not subjects and whose relation--the sharing itself--is not a communion,...But these singular beings are themselves constituted by sharing, they are distributed and placed, or rather spaced, by the sharing that makes them others; other for one another, and other, infinitely other for the Subject of their fusion, which is engulfed in the sharing, in the ecstasy of the sharing: 'communicating' by not 'communing'. These 'places of communication' are no longer places of fusion, even though in them one passes from one to the other; they are defined and exposed by their dislocation." [The Inoperative Community Preface] This might sound promising if it were not premised upon a fear of castration: it is too late to attempt to wed Woman to Heidegger, for there is no longer any such thing as 'Woman'. Rapunzel has blown up the castle, shaved her head and persuaded the witch to move into silicon.

32. A concrete example of this can be found in role of the human in manufacturing industry, where it is no longer simply a matter of the disembodiment of specific organs for allocated tasks. In 19th century, Eli Whitney put into practice his idea that if gun parts were machined accurately enough, guns could be assembled from the first parts that come to hand, rather than from parts tailored to the individual gun. This interchangeability of parts moved the worker away from his construing himself as a designated part by association with (and mimicry of) other specific parts (as in the mechanistic era).

#### 4. The Kantian Subject

In the previous chapter, we witnessed the failure of the traditional concept of community to ground an idea of community as a being-in-common (*communio*) of the post-Enlightenment post-Humanist subject. Communities attempt to domesticate and circumscribe desire within a communal structure of Being was shown to be successful only upon the presupposition of a Noumenal (transcendent) sphere wherein there is guaranteed the (unrepresentable) equivalence of transcendental subject with transcendental object.

The productive space of the sensuous intuiting body opened up in the Transcendental Aesthetic of the Critique of Pure Reason is immediately closed down with the assumption of a transcendental object once the pure concepts of the understanding have been imposed. As Schopenhauer famously remarks:

"These later [the categories] become the fearful procrustean bed on to which he [Kant] violently forces all things in the world and everything that occurs in man, shrinking from no violence and disdaining no sophism in order merely to be able to repeat everywhere the symmetry of that table."  
[The World as Will and Representation Vol.I.  
p.430]

The entrenchment of the categories in the experiential (knowable) world is then presented with a definitive game-plan by means of the further imposition, upon a now passive faculty of sensation, of the transcendental schema (equating through determination the empirical subject with its object). In her essay entitled "Paradox *A Priori*", Irigaray notes the consequences for unfettered sensation in its relationship to matter (a relation she conceives of in terms of an originary maternal link between Man and Nature)<sup>1</sup>, of this imposition:

"Anything conceded to nature is immediately and imperiously taken back and will be found useful only insofar as it ensures more rigorous dominion over her. Thus, the function of the transcendental schema will be to negate an intrinsic quality of the sensible world, and this irremediably. Nature is foreclosed in her primary empirical naivete. Diversity of feeling is set aside in order to build up the concept of the object, and the immediacy of the relationship with the mother is sacrificed.... In this way the multiplicity of unlabeled sensations is blacked out, reduced to a single entity that can be used to legislate--in the cruelty of the understanding--the bond to the empirical matrix, in other words, to *hysteria*."

[Speculum p.204]



Schematization, as the mechanism of repression, by legitimating the categories of cognition, binds thought to a unitary and linear mode of progression that is both transcendently determined and teleological. As can be seen from the very layout of the Critique of Pure Reason, schematization only becomes possible once the division of thought between its twin operations in transcendental and empirical subjectivity has been elaborated. This division, by its very nature precludes a purely creative act of the imagination which is seemingly constrained, as slave to reason, to reproduction in the service of the understanding.

Understanding, we are told in the "Transcendental Deduction" [CPR A97-8], is made possible by a threefold synthesis as the ground of the spontaneity of thought. These three synthetic operations are those of, "the *apprehension* of representations as modifications of the mind in intuition, their *reproduction* in imagination, and their *recognition* in a concept." [CPR A97] The role of imagination in the second of these operations, whilst having the status of the *a priori*, in grounding the necessary synthetic unity of appearances, does so only on the level of representation, that is, in terms of already schematized determinations of inner sense. The most important principle *a priori* however, is that of the synthetic unity of the manifold in *all possible* intuition, which is supplied by pure apperception. The transcendental

unity of apperception, moreover, "relates to the pure synthesis of imagination as an a priori condition of the possibility of all combination of the manifold in one knowledge." [CPR A118] What we are dealing with here is not the reproductive imagination involved in the second synthesis, but a purely *productive* imagination. In this sense then, and despite Kant's insistence upon the necessary unity of its power (a unity we assume to be imposed by reason and cannot yet think of in terms of harmonization or attunement), we witness the move that will eventually lead (in the Critique of Judgement) to the formulation of the idea of community from out of which the transcendental subject must emerge: "the principle of the necessary unity of pure (productive) imagination, prior to apperception, is the ground of the possibility of all knowledge, especially of experience." [ibid]

Pure productive imagination in making possible the unrepresentable activity of the transcendental unity of apperception, (unrepresentable in that its action is always in advance of its product, empirical subjectivity), on Kant's own terms can have no temporal determination, but is rather the process of time determination for experience (as set out in the "Schematism"), thus, Kant asserts that it is a "pure original *unchangeable* consciousness" [A107. my emphasis]. This notion of a unique, isolated and static apperception is,

of course, challenged by the very idea of an outside, an outside of its own activity and an outside of time.<sup>2</sup> In order to be receptive to "the given" of intuition, it must be empathetic, and for this to be possible, it must incorporate within itself some potential for development (rather than simply positing a totality through a transcendental idea).<sup>3</sup> In Kant's terms however, (and prior to the writing of the Critique of Judgement), such a claim involves the mistaken equation of empirical consciousness (apprehension of the manifold in intuition) with the transcendental unity of apperception, whose correlate is the transcendental object "=x", and/or a failure to appreciate the semi-divine quality of reason (having usurped the role of productive imagination) in relation to the unconditioned:

"The concept of reason is... none other than the concept of the *totality* of the *conditions* for any given conditioned. Now since it is the *unconditioned* alone which makes possible the totality of conditions, and, conversely, the totality of conditions is always itself unconditioned, a pure concept of reason can in general be explained by the concept of the unconditioned, conceived as containing the ground of the synthesis of the conditioned." [CPR B379]

Within the bounds of reason and the understanding, as drawn in the Critique of Pure Reason, the radical potential for creativity of the pure productive imagination cannot be explored. Strict regulation of the sphere of reflection keeps its activity in check, re-configuring it in the form of a *focus imaginarius* for the territorializing claims of schematization. The options, elucidated here by Irigaray, are severely limited:

"Either the 'mirror' has already been defined as inclusive of the object it must mirror, or it simply re-determines that object's intrinsic quality by framing it. Or the mirror does not 'know' the 'object' proposed and has to constitute a general reproducible matrix while reflecting it. This requires the mirror to re-think it/himself, re-flect it/himself, so as to be able to subordinate to its/his unity and to the unity of its/his law this new *diversion* of nature which affronts it/him." [Speculum p.206]

For Kant, the concept of the subject (as empirical, transcendental and Noumenal being), was a radical formulation, a function of both universalization and individuation, whose purpose, at least in part, consisted in the renunciation of the simple idea of the soul as supersensible site for the being of community (at) one with

the divine. For Kant, the universal "I", that is the transcendental unity of apperception is both producer and product of the originary moment of community, it determinations the time of experience and is thus motor of all schematization, unchallenged in its ascendancy once productive imagination has been suitably constrained and disenfranchised. The individuated "me" of the empirical subject, on the other hand, is the determined self, determined in time in its concrete engagement with the world through its senses, and thus the unwitting agent of schematization.

The importance of the formulations arrived at in Kantian critique cannot be underestimated in the history of desire. The construction and emergence of the classical concept of the subject is generally held to have originated in the works of Descartes (and in a more complex and confused manner in Husserl's Cartesian Meditations). Its demise occurs (again debatably) somewhere between Nietzsche and Heidegger or Bataille. The occurrence of both its culmination--its sovereign moment in the articulation of Enlightenment thought (exemplified by Kant in his essay "What is Enlightenment?")--and its downfall in the ideological destitution of the modernist subject and the de-centering, dispersion and disinheritance of its orphaned postmodern offspring however, must ultimately pay tribute to the critical inception of

Kantian philosophy into the machinations of Western thought in its attempts to contain the forces of desire.

Kant's schematism steadfastly differentiates between subject and object and fixes the (transcendental) subject firmly in the driving seat. With the elaboration of the true seat of community and determination of its subject in the Critique of Judgement however, there emerges upon the critical scene an excess of matter, sensation and imagination (and ultimately thereby, practices of the self) escaping submission to schematization.

In the decades since the Critiques, it has become increasingly obvious that the form of the object can no longer sustain the enterprise of truth. This being so, the subject itself, that is, the space of the subject in the process of schematization, has been de-objectified. In this movement, what we have seen is not what one might at first have expected, namely the denial of the efficacy of the empirical subject, the "me", although this may indeed be one of its effects. What has happened is rather a destabilizing (or, in a certain context, a deconstructive reversal) of the schematization itself and a freeing up of the productive imagination for non-objective association and interaction through *commercium*. The dismantelling of the schematism has effected (and is still in the process of affecting) a

collapse of the transcendental subject, the "I" onto the empirical "me" and a making immanent of the transcendental conditions for the continuation of a multiple self, no longer as universal and individuated being, but as singularity.

Thinking the objectless subject entails that one can neither designate the subjects correlate in presentation, nor suppose that it answers to any of cognition's so-called objectives. The subject (thought of as a self) is freed up, dissociated from reflexive jurisdiction, and its *focus imaginarius* becomes a useless fiction of the ego. Retaining the concept "the subject" for the being whose conditions are immanent to it (the subject after the fall of the transcendental "I"), is thus feasible only when construed as that which Alan Badiou terms "what is locally born out". [After the Subject. p.25] "A subject is neither a result nor an origin. It is the local status of the procedure, a configuration that exceeds the situation." [ibid. p.27]

## 5. The Sensile Subject.

The inadequacy of the traditional interpretation of the Kantian formulation of the subject can be thought of in terms of its failure to provide us with a satisfactory account of the experiential self, that is, the perceptual sensate embodied self. This failure, as we have highlighted, can be traced back to two problematics present in the first and third Critiques; the first concerning the ambiguous nature of the "given", and the second, the manner in which intuition is cast in a receptive role, in association with the synthetic function of the reproductive imagination, whose productive - spontaneous - counterpart is disenfranchised. In light of this reading, it is important that we move now to a re-assessment of the role played by intuition, or better, perception (vis-a-vis desiring production), in theories whose intent is not to ground or fall back upon a transcendental subject as the focal point of the experiential body.

Merleau-Ponty, in his Phenomenology of Perception, focuses upon objects in the "sensible field" not simply as fixed spatio-temporal configurations or events, each particular (thing) is taken rather to be a generalization in process. In this way, the "given" in the sensible field is itself an attempted articulation of that field in becoming. Such a claim can be accommodated, to an extent, within the Kantian



framework by rephrasing the assertion such that each thing or event is the spatially punctuated moment in which the schema of being is elaborated. Unlike the ambiguous nature of the "given" in the Critique of Pure Reason however, here the sensible field is constituted as an active sphere of mass concretising commercium of becomings (becoming stable, fluid, coloured, rounded, deep, visible, audible, textual, etc.).

When something in the sensible field touches the sensibility, all the sensitive surfaces of the body become fixated, moving so as to be centered upon it. The whole of sensibility converges, and what occurs is a certain stabilization, a normalizing equilibrium is brought into effect, and this because, as a focal centre has been successfully pinpointed and homed in on, there is established as a base from which we can have a sense of what is up and down, right and left, near and far. There is no sense here in which what has been brought into being is to be thought of as a transcendental object, as reflection of the transcendental subject; *focus imaginarius* constructing by categorical demarcation the being of the object within the schematized environment. In Merleau-Ponty's account, it is rather the body itself, as sensuous multiplicity, that becomes a systems operator prescribing through systematization a hierarchy of levels and axes of the sensible field upon which things may materialize.

The surplus forces of the living body seek out configurations upon which to discharge themselves. Thus forces build up on the surfaces of the organisms boundaries whose accumulation and discharge affect themselves, intensifying in an immanent sensuality. This immanent (raw or original) sensibility is not a coalition for the comprehensive embrace of the real, but an anarchy without principles, a spiraling violence of pleasure and pain. And as Lingis tells us,

"Our pleasures and our pains exhaust themselves; our laughter and our tears die away; our blessing and our cursing are carried away into the enigmas of the future and silences of the past. They are of themselves gratuitous outpourings of force, expenditures without return. Their glory is purely worldly; their force does not hold or redeem."

[Foreign Bodies p.103]

If the expanding aspect of reality is the real rather than ideal focus of sensibility, sensitivity and the sensuality of identity formation in its engaged commercium with others (its sensitivity towards and against, its tendencies and potentialities), then tension is maintained in the body through perpetual association or confrontation in differing interactions, that is, in the play of non-identicals. This is not to posit an essentializing aspect to perception, at least not as traditionally understood. If we must speak at all of

a sensuous essence of the perceived thing, then it must be thought of (following Lyotard and Lingis) as a musical theme that is one in all its variations. Essence, is itself evolutionary, it develops through commercium with other elements. There is never constituted in this way a complete unique and definitive article.

According to Merleau-Ponty, a feature of the organism, as corporeal substance, is that it makes a sign for itself - "I" - to which it is itself witness, to which and with which it bears witness. Once the "I" is made from out of the corporeal substance it is possible to begin marking out a referential diagram in relation to it. Such mapping looks suspiciously like the territorializing exploits of the *focus imaginarius*, although this time with a greater reflective distance (and thus not in the self identical relation of transcendental subject and object), where the outer environment, now designated as other, outer, not-I, can be mapped through the co-ordination of referents, partial objects and objectives. The making of the self is here the making of self into an object for self as for others, by becoming a referent of the sign put forth.

In this account the environment is structured on the basis of an idea of repetition (re-iteration of the 'real'). Patterns are spaced, outlined and made distinct through referencing

objects to a quasi-Kantian, (but this time interpretive rather than schematic) *focus imaginarius* which presents us with signs of them. It is only by relating back through the silvered surface of the mirror to the sensual self, the surface of bodily sensation out of which the "I" was formulated; only by way of utilizing the movements and positions of this original crystallized sensual body, that such signing is possible. It is in the interconnection of the originary sensual body (which does not differentiate itself from any Other, but establishes difference in terms of differing potentials of force, expenditure and contentment), that the "I", that signing as a representational and reproductive method for producing objects, becomes possible. With this move however, we return inextricably back to witness the birth of a transcendental subject (the "I") from out of a *Gemeinsinn* of *Gemeinschaft*, that is, of community. The sensuous body is retained behind the silvered surface of the mirror, not as anorganic plenum, but as foetal corpse, a communio-social abortion.

It is by no means necessary however, that an account of the formation of self on the basis of sensation, should return to the positing of a transcendental subject or schema (in whatever indirect or mystical form). In the following account (concerning the development of a baby), Brian Massumi presents us with an account of self founded upon the

conjunctive and connective syntheses of *commercium*:

"So far, there is only a 'larval self'. It is ineffectual, fleeting, and strictly localized. It is tied to the conjunctive synthesis over which it hovers. It is actualized whenever that synthesis is actualized, in other words periodically, as the baby moves through the anticipated states its life is beginning to be. This self is not alone. There are many conjunctions of the same nature, and a similar self for every one of them. The baby is a teeming mass of larval selves, each associated with a threshold state featuring a privileged organ on the way to satisfaction through connection with another privileged organ. On the feedback level of recognition, there are always at least two organs in play, usually nominally belonging to distinct bodies: mouth and breast. But it is no exaggeration to say that on this level the breast is as much a part of the baby's body as it is of the mother's. It is infolded in the infant brain. It is the inbetween of biological bodies, as infolded in memory." [A user's guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia p.73]

On the face of it, there is no necessity for phenomenological accounts of the self to stand opposed to Massumi's exposition

of the "larval self" in its states of becoming. The seeming *focus imaginarius* of the Phenomenologist need not function as a cognitive categorical nexus of power. For Merleau-Ponty it would be more accurate to speak of the focal point in terms of the integration of sensibility through a "postural schema" and not through conceptual mental operations, as that which helps explain the way in which we perceive one thing at a time within the multiplicity of the sensible field. There is, he claims, an internal systematics, or diagram of force orientated toward specific objectives that maintains itself in the systematic variation and redistribution of parts and powers. The body is in a perpetual state of tension. This is not to say that there is some central command system of will, it is rather the case that each energized part determines the force and orientation of the other powers; for the adult body, the foot stepping over the puddle induces a tilt in the axis of the torso and stabilizing displacements of the other leg, the head and arms.

This idea of a motile body is, for Merleau-Ponty, neither a particular nor a universal, it is rather an element, a medium whose every particular position in a space and a time generalizes itself into a schema engendering a specific range of variations. As the same leg steps over a branch, it does not invent a new schema from scratch, but perfects an already existing one. Every occurrence of focusing upon something

creates anew, by picking up a schema, varying and actualizing it from others that have gone before. When I pass on this perception, sensation or experience, when I share it with others or force it upon them, I do not pass on qualia or sense-data, I do not exchange with them lithographs or maps of the world; I contaminate their sensibility with a virus, a viral schema that may work gradually, speedily or not at all on their schemas with which it is associated, drawing out new elements of force from patterns that lead back into past schematizations and forward into future compression. Engagement in the real environment, in this sense, involves participation (through synthetic operations) through a whole matrix of sensible levels.<sup>4</sup>

For Kant, man is the author of nature by virtue of his divine inheritance (his genius) and its judge by virtue of his humanity. Although he does not create the perceptible field of phenomena, it is he who gives it the coherence and consistency that make it realizable and meaningful through his perception of it, that is, through the cognitive ordering of what he senses. The sensible field is represented as a law-governed totality of nature. Schematization ensures the identification of sensations of things with concepts, under the overall command of the a priori imperative of universality and necessity (derived from the birth of the transcendental subject as being of community). If it is

possible, as has been attempted above, to transmute a Merleau-Pontian postural schema of the body into a viral schema, and to locate the mechanism of that schema in the attractor state of the body (the material and immaterial anorganic plenum variously mapped through the nervous system and synesthetic sensory apparatus), then the role of body itself must be more thoroughly analyzed than has so far been the case. For our project here, the phenomenological obsession with perception is too closely associated with an allegiance to a Kantian or quasi-Kantian subject by virtue of its problematic relation to consciousness and self-consciousness. Its importance however, cannot be underestimated in terms of its introduction of non-cognitive schemas in the production of embodied selves.

For Merleau-Ponty, the objective that demands coherence and consistency (of perception) lies in the object itself, or rather, is derived from the world-order and not from the subject as critical overseer. The (sensory-motor) body itself is part of this world-order and orients itself accordingly. In this way, what makes things the objectives of perception is the imperative force of the world, the world operating as imperative that drives perception ever further, and the world itself is evolving in commercium with 'us'. In formulating itself as a postural schema, this imperative integrates our sensibility and mobilizes our motor forces thereby ordering



our competence.

To what extent can this theoretization of perception be carried over into post-modernity where the world is always virtual in its reality; with the world-order displaced in favour of an "order out of chaos" [Prigogene]? Do postmodern (impractical) spaces non-the-less enter into the imperative force of the practicable and real world? Should we re-assess the radicality of the move being addressed here and settle upon the claim that what is being effected is a retreat into the margins of the world and not an engagement with the virtual or a move into becoming, or assert that what is at stake is a necessary relationship with the power to advance into practicable reality and take hold of things? We must at least conclude that these options are unified in their failure to account for the complex nature of our engagement with a new order of reality<sup>5</sup> in our era of postmodernity so long as it is insisted upon that reality remain a fundamentally phenomenological concern where the unpracticable or non-place spaces of postmodernity are characterized as fragments of the perceived world.

There are vortices towards which the body that lets loose its hold on predetermined and proscribed levels of the world--the dreaming, the visionary, the hallucinating, the lascivious body--gets drawn. As the body approaches these spaces and

sensibility enters into these vortices beyond the determined levels of world, it does so imperatively (although not reactively). In these new spaces, these non-places of postmodernity, the phenomenology of the body is redundant. There is no demand for a focal point from which sight lines may be drawn and perspective (equilibrium and stability) ensured. In the non-place of cyberspace it isn't just that communication (as engagement with the environment) is changed, but the self, social space and interaction are themselves transformed. The socially situated self is intricately linked to other selves constructed in interaction with each other and the environment and influenced by the context in which interaction unfolds, which includes the conditions (and limitations) of their production. Society and subjects are fragile constructions (of selfhood) dependent upon an interactive order. But the interactive event is no longer reliant upon a mystical or transcendent spillage in the form of the "given", nor upon a coercive imperative in the ordering of immanence for survival of the organism. The very identity allowing for composition of the organism is de-programmed as the traditionally marked social values determining interaction drop away or become pawns in a game without any set rules.

Our bodies as sensory-motor systems generate excess force, force that enables them to move towards perceived objectives

and in doing so, to code their own movements; as substances they can also be moved and coded by others. But this is no longer a process of subjectification through objectification (programming the de-coding of becoming), in the new cyberspace environment. The body of the post-human is a cyber-body, in process of becoming-woman that is immanent and non-schematizable as such.

## 6. Death and the Other: The end of Subjectivity.

Human subjectivity, in its classical *modus operandi* marks out denizens of the terrain of transcendence,<sup>6</sup> organisms bounded by identities forged from oppositional structures of difference that maintain the integrity of that over-mapped zone of incorporeal Being. Morality and control (or more specifically, the ethical law of practical reason and unifying categorical imperative of coherence and consistency) are inseparable in the historically constructed and aesthetically essentialised human subject. They are transcendental conditions, mechanisms of the transcendent figures of Death and the Other whose Ideality functions in a regulatory mode to keep man in his place and all places subject to his Law. To be, is to act, and to act is always either to accord with or to go against the law. The imperative to think and to act thoughtfully is thus imposed unconditionally from the moment one accepts one's assigned place in human society. To be human is to act under the imperative and burden of self-imposed, self-reproducing guilt. The formulation of the imperative as an imperative for law - for the universal and necessary - is a product of thought, a program that thought itself legislates and maintains through representation. The force of the imperative that precedes its formulation as imperative for law is the force of the Noumenal, the transcendent double of Death and

the Other made manifest in the body's engagement with the world out there, the physical universe with its own order.

This story of the birth of the Humanist ethico-political Enlightenment subject is dependent upon the experience of alterity, achieved in the separation or the blossoming of community into individuated organisms possessing both ego and a sensory-surface of desiring-production. What is effected through such organisms is a double association of reference compartmentalized within the space of the hive mind particularized into memory. This memory is on the one hand, the significant sign referring to a real or unreal referent via a meaning which is ideal; and on the other, an index, where the perceivable reality of the sign (the tone, emphasis, tempo, etc., as variant of the immediate instantiation of the particular - this memory) is associated with another reality particularized in a here and now (a different, an other memory). From this double association there results a hypostatization of another mind as a variant of *mine own*, an 'other', who can issue expressions that are in conflict with *mine own* and are only accommodated problematically to the consistent and coherent order of *mine own* experience. Only through such hypostatization is the imperative for law internalized. The Kantian transcendental unity of apperception of the ethical subject is thus born in such a way that its internal operations and maintenance will

always and necessarily be unrealisable to it, to the self of empirical consciousness.

With the birth of this self there is grown a skin around the newly formed organism. A surface which can stage the traversals of the pain that both protects the inner ego and, at the same time, make it vulnerable to the surfaces of others, maintaining the necessity of acting in accordance with the internalizable law. The imperative of the law thus gains the weight of the force of exteriority; the ideality of death (as radical exteriority) being a focused reality in the eyes of the other. This other, in being a reflection of the focus imaginarius of the Noumenal, transcendent subject of ethical law, is consecrated as both same and unapproachable, unattainable desired alien. When you see this other bleed, when you hear it scream, when you watch it die, you too will feel the pain, projected onto your own bodily surfaces, mapped onto them, and you will know and respect the law of man, the law of mortal beings.

Morality and control are in symbiosis where screaming, burning, bleeding and death are explained in terms of volition - some act done or left undone. And as to be is to act under accusation, all pain becomes medium of the relation between body and internalized law, birthing a sufficiently self-reflective (ie. guilty) subject to be deemed a person

(an ethical being). This role that casts the body within a skin that is the conductor of exteriority, mediating pain through the nervous system or the eyes of another, to the inner sanctum, the noumenal self, subject of internalized law, has, at least since the event of Kantian Enlightenment thought, prefigured philosophical understanding of what it is to be human.

There is no escape for the human from the infernal schema. No one gets out of the human condition alive. Every occurrence of focusing upon something creates anew, by picking up a schema, varying and actualizing it from others that have gone before. When humans pass on this perception they call sensation or experience, when it is shared with others or forced upon them, what is transmitted is not patterns, tactile impressions for desiring production and becoming, but codes for the maintenance of control, consistency and coherence of cognitively categorizable experience.

Here is Man, author and judge of nature. Man who cannot create or feel the perceptible field of phenomena, but only give it the coherence and consistency that make it realizable and meaningful through his perception of it, that is, through the cognitive ordering of what he senses. The sensible field is represented as a law-governed totality of nature. Schematization ensures the identification of sensations of

things with concepts, under the overall command of the a priori imperative of universality and necessity. But systems failure is immanent, there is a defect. Real and abstract material yet incorporeal affects, exploring connections prior to selection resonate in, upon, and from bodies that bypass schematization, activating viruses at work in the sensory-motor apparatus that generates excess force. Such force coordinates movement towards perceived objectives (teleonomically and teleomatically as well as teleologically) and into engagements with unlegislated for matter where velocity outranks determinative progression and where couplings evolve their own codes in and through this excess as non-regulative modes of transcendence.

Here are configured unlegislated for others, those for whom subjectivity is, if anything, merely a side effect of commercium, those whose conditions of becoming are immanent to their very existence.<sup>7</sup> The body of woman, cyberbodies, virtual bodies, bodies whose nervous system is knitted into data suits, Sado-Masochistic bodies, these are the bodies whose pain gets under the skin (which absorbs rather than deflecting or transmuting it). The categorical sheep-pens set up to discipline and maintain specific, stable identity constructs cannot contain these bodies. Even the barricades between well-institutionalized pens have become turnstiles spinning out of control. Fenced off and carefully maintained



pastures for superior beings are riddled with labyrinths resounding with the breath of the multitude. Gennels are discovered to have been channelled between the mother-pen and the executive-pen, worm-holes between the happily-married-middle-aged-male-pen and the exhibitionist-weekend-drag-queen-pen, to say nothing of the tunnels being dug out for those partaking in sex changes, longevity therapy and skin-colouring treatments. Many structures, especially those intended for the protection of the humanist quarter, have collapsed through the sheer weight of ironic overuse. This has not however been achieved through the excavation or construction of passageways, transcendental or mystical, to enable movement from one level of existence to another<sup>8</sup>. Unencumbered intuition and productive imagination maintain a fluidity of the landscape of desire. Kant was not unaware of this and threatened by the moral anarchy it might engender through the destruction of identity politics, maintains that it is reason in speculative mode, rather than the multiplicity of sensation in league with productive imagination, that is responsible for such unregulated connective and conjunctive synthetic operations:

"For whereas, so far as nature is concerned, experience supplies the rules and is the source of truth, in respect of the moral laws it is, alas, the mother of illusion!... we must meantime occupy ourselves with a less resplendent, but still

meritorious task, namely, to level the ground, and to render it sufficiently secure for moral edifices of these majestic [Platonic] dimensions. For this ground has been honeycombed by subterranean workings which reason, in its confident but fruitless search for hidden treasures, has carried out in all directions, and which threaten the security of the superstructures."

[CPR B375-6]

Identity and identity-loss correspond to being in or slipping out of one's assigned category-pen and the paths through the social field associated with it; but these are the side effects not the foundation, of the process of individuation. What is founding is the body's nonidentical threshold states, its potential for becomings of all kinds. As the categorical grids become dysfunctional in terms of social production, the apparatus of identity is forced beyond the threshold of sameness, into singularity and intensity, a moebius strip of hybrid carnal invention. Kate, a postmodern transsexual explains: "I went from being male to not-male, to female, and now to not-female."

Bio-genetic cross-species fertilization, the radical data provided by genetic species profiling, the performance of

cosmetic surgery and reproductive technology, as well as the easy and anonymous availability of counter culture materials, have all but obliterated the means of establishing the identity of a being through its present bodily attributes or in relation to those with whom it currently shares its life. Sheep have become bulls, and bulls, cows, that have in turn become fences, seen lolloping away down the electric blue glade.

Somnambulists caught up in an identity dystopia become control collaborators, averting their gaze from the lawlessness reflected in eyes that cannot be made Other-for-them, reading crisis into each news headline, eating it for their dinner, and coating their thick reflective skins with its horror. They do not try to justify their dream-world, yet they know that if this fabrication of control is not maintained, if they don't somehow scare or seduce us into the cud chewing pleasure of counting sheep, they risk losing the fictional bodily integrity that keeps them safe watching reruns of Star Trek and anticipating a large pension.

With no Other and no Death, guilt is de-mystified and the status of moral discourse reliant upon imperative and law is open to question. We are faced with no absence or Lack by means of which to structure radical exteriority, grounding and focusing the production of subjectivity. The experience

of exteriority - cry of another - is not a moment of antagonism or confirmation, experienced by a well-assembled and well-ordered self finding its personal telos either threatened or legitimated. There is no perfectly ordered and integrated subject with a coherent and consistent life-story prior to commercium, any more than there is one produced by it. The self is merely one pattern, theoretically (and temporally) abstracted and isolated from the general commercium of flesh, blood, ideas, and sex.

Cyber-bodies, like Sado-masochist bodies, stand out as exemplars of the postmodern venture of engaging in activities which threaten the integrity of the flesh in a number of ways. Unlike the anticipated pain of perpetually incomplete Enlightenment philosophical thinking, such pursuits do not mark out an initiatory step in the becoming-whole of the ethically integrated subject, but the becoming-amorphous of the central nervous system. For the ethical and politico-aesthetic subject of Humanism, pain is the means by which one internalises the moral imperative, that is, it is vanguard for the institution of Law. For the cyber, transsexual, sado-masochist body of post-humanism it is that by means of which the law itself becomes a mechanism for transformation, and immanent condition for becoming.

The function of the cyborg, as exemplary body-in-becoming, is

not to be taken as an ideological creation after-language that simply reconstitutes a privileged state of being, re-encapsulating desire, for it is in no sense concerned with a logic of counterdomination (formulated as perfect communication), or with the institution of alternative command and control structures. Its mode of operation is conducted through processes of hyper-differentiation in the form of interference, static and viral contagion. Viral inception into the categorical mainframe produces a form of monstrosity, contamination as a subspecies of information malfunction or communications pathology; it incurs a process of misrecognition leading to hybridization and breakdown of the boundaries of a strategic assemblage called Self.

Opposition to the (be)coming configurations of the body using the cyborg as ontological launch-pad is mounted on the basis of war-mongering (man versus machine). Beneath the obsessional science fiction and Hollywood *Terminator* models of which, lies an opposition between future man as carbon-based, organic individual organism seated before a keyboard, bound to a body that eats, sleeps, defecates, bleeds and dies, and its silicon based surrogate; the electronic avatar which, decoupled from its physical other, is a superbody, a body that is 'virtually' immortal. The pattern follows the traditional binary of man-versus-nature on the basis of a survivalist opposition between man and his other. On such a

reading it is impossible for man to enter the cyborg condition so long as he can die from starvation, that is, so long as his basic alimentary nature is not done away with. If food and waste were, on the other hand to enter into the cyborg condition, the resulting entity would remain human.<sup>9</sup>

The human-become-cyborg is not a hybrid-human, a human prosthetic or implant freak, what its ontology suggests is rather a fusion of human body with electronic culture and biotechnology in what amounts to a logic of incorporation. Becoming-cyborg is not to do with either the loathing of the flesh or the redundancy of carnal desire. But nor is it an end in itself. The technology that will someday radically alter what we think of as our individual death is already complicating specifications (legal and moral) as to the nature and parameters of what counts as a life. It is perhaps in the field of reproductive biotechnology more so than in any other that the radicality of what it means to be post-human has been made manifest. Here technology makes it possible to initiate the growth of a child from the genetically engineered contents of a test tube, a child whose so-called biological mother was a 28 week old foetus that never took a breath of air, and whose own progeny - utilizing the same batch of ovaries, gestated in a non-reproductive partners' amniotic sack - can be both her children and her aunts and uncles.

Reproductive biotechnology is perceived by the control collaborators--those who claim to speak for the moral majority--as posing the greatest threat to human society and community. Not surprisingly, given the paternalist and ageist orientation of our culture, much of this threat is focussed upon the ability of such technology to empower frigid, infertile or post-menopausal women, enabling them to take the responsibility for new life. The physical degeneration of flesh growing old and the cocooned security of conception and gestation within the womb - the two ends of the human life-span - the requisite parameters of what it means to be a human being, are no longer assured. Power structures cannot but be altered when non-passive, productive post-menopausal women become visible and articulate in a society whose last acknowledgement of them culminated in their being burnt at the stake. Once both the generational lineage and patriarchal basis of a body able to transform its racial, sexual and productive configurations have been made redundant, the power of the ethically determined subject begins to unravel of itself.

Biotechnology moves us into the sphere of the post-human both in terms of its forcing a disengagement between the body and its traditional boundaries of birth and death (the Other and pain), and in its very real commercium with non-human substances. It is only within this already well-established

(although still war-torn) arena of the post-human-condition made visible enlarge part by biotechnology, that the body of the cybernetic, virtual or becoming-post-human gets to make it beyond science fiction.

The party thrown by postmodern techno-culture to celebrate the apocalypse at the end of humanities reign is a virtual-shamanic-rave of frenetic activity and dizzying speed, but one that is ill-informed and risks burn-out. Its dystopian visions are matched in their sublimity only by the excesses of its utopian boys-club camaraderie. Proclamations issued from the foaming mouths of philosophers since Nietzsche structure the lyrical terrain of the virtual technoscape. Hands clasped around the rope that sounds the death-knell of modernity are past blistering and bleeding. Wave upon wave, peeling out an audible landscape of devastation and jubilation: The death of God! The end of Metaphysics! The dissolution of Spirit! The demise of ethics and morality! The parting of Politics! The redundancy of ideologies of alterity! The vacuity of the transcendent! The final extinction of Man! Each proclamation, each wave a cascade of orgasmic sperm, wrung by the bell-tollers hands that pull and pull and pull on the umbilical cord that will finally detach humanity from its Enlightenment project - the birth of the subject. And yet still they come, each in turn, having proven their worth, exhibiting their bloodied hands and naming



themselves last in line, the final Nazarene, (and their audience, still picking through the left-overs, the rotting remains of humanity for a trinket, a little nostalgic souvenir, continue to applaud). We cannot ask who the real party-goers are, but only who they were. History becomes an autopsy and a de-briefing that maps the war between control collaborators and cyborgs.

## Notes

1. The importance for the formulation of the subject of a necessary opposition between Man and Nature and the reliance upon a feminization of Nature, enabling unlabelled sensation to be marked hysterical (as in too unmediated a relation with matter), will be explored at length in the next chapter.

2. It is also challenged, as consciousness, by the idea of the unconscious, a point to which we will return in a later section.

3. This, on the assumption that we cannot give any positive account of the Noumenal (wherein the empathetic relation would be transcendently assured), as Kant claims is the case.

4. The coherence and compossibility of the fields of our various senses and the perceptual fields of others are known only in the continuous transitions by which each field opens upon the next. We recognize the coherence and consistency of the world whose fields evolve about us by virtue of style. Style designates a coherence and consistency we do not comprehend but take up and are caught up in. In this way it is the style of the visible by which we know that we are not dreaming, we doubt the reality of an appearance only by believing more in another perceptible configuration.

5. Donna Haraway documents this new reality, in respect of the transformations in life sciences in the twentieth century, as follows:

"Pre-Second World War

Represented by R.M.Yerkes

psychobiology

human engineering

organism

physiology

intelligence

person

Post-Second World War

Represented by

E.O.Wilson

sociobiology

communication control

cybernetic machine

systems theory

information

gene

personality services

sex and mind

instinct and engineering

time-motion studies

human relations management

adaptivity

eugenics for race hygiene

nervous system for integration

endocrine system for integration

homeostasis

superorganism

population genetics  
and ecology

genes and survival  
machines

constraints and  
choice or redesign of  
trajectories

ergonomics

sociotechnical  
systems management  
optimization

sexual investment  
strategies for  
genetic profit

sensory channels and  
processing centres  
for environmental  
tracking

c h e m i c a l  
communication for  
environmental  
tracking

feedback and other  
control system  
mechanisms

population"

[Simians, Cyborgs and Women p.44]

6. Transcendence here is being used in the traditional Kantian sense as conditions for the possibility of...

7. Massumi's description of the larval self of the developing baby (in the previous section) is just one instance of this.

8. This move does undoubtedly take place however and will be explored in Baudrillard's use of feminine seduction as a means of moving between zones that do not fall within the

same representational system (by means of utilizing the traditional concept of woman as transcendental caponiere), in a later section.

9. This is obviously a gross simplification of the models produced by science and its fiction, but the basic point remains. It is a logical operation, moreover, familiar to those who oppose the intrusion of women, as women, into the male economy, and to those who claim that the feminization of the workplace, the aesthetic and political recognition of an unrepresentable basis of justice, and the emergence of a Care ethic in medical and other practices, is not a feature of women's entrance into the public arena, but a development of Man.

## 7. Cyborgs and Women.

"Bodies have become cyborgs - cybernetic organisms - compounds of hybrid techno-organic embodiment and textuality. The cyborg is text, machine, body and metaphor - all theorized and engaged in practice in terms of communications." [Haraway. Simians. p.212]

Theories of the subject rejecting an originary multiplicity of the self-in-becoming in respect of the commercium of the sensual body, tend to fall back upon the idea of desire-as-community, in the form of the full body of the socius (individualized in the reflective and re-iterative processes of the *focus imaginarius*). The myth of the full body, as we have seen, is at least partially the result of the instantiation of binary oppositional structures (man/woman, man/nature, man/animal, man/machine), whose collapse has brought about, on the one hand, the drive to free up a productive force of desire from its domestication under the *allgemeine Stimme*, and on the other, attempts to re-qualify the binding quality of communio. The scene of post-modernism's mourning over the body-politic or social body, as an example of re-qualification through memorialization (of the founding ideal or lack), is symptomatically linked, in

our era, to the growth in theorizations of "panic" and "consumer" bodies; orphaned bodies whose response to the severing of the umbilical cord is to invent a pseudo-economy of representation, in the form of apocalypse or market-mall culture, as their newly adopted mode of being-in-common. The problem with these accounts is that whilst claiming a bodily orientation, they none-the-less tend towards the privileging of an account of the individual produced through feminization and simulation on the basis of a universal pre-existing male body-form.

The cyber-feminist body<sup>1</sup> is not simply transgressive (in respect of the dominant phallic ideal), for transgression always assumes in advance a surface of bodily unity upon which it can inscribe its patterns of displacement. Transgression is a game better left to the sons who would become-woman through emasculation of the father and the promulgation of parthenogenic practices (immaculations of the self). These re-birthings, moreover, rely upon an implicit inside/outside opposition in their denial of paternity; working through exclusive disjunctions, they continue to bind themselves to a history of desire cursed in triplicate through Lack, Alterity, and Zero (death).

The cyber-feminist, unlike the neo-Nazarene, is an inclusive hybrid, she/it knows that there is no outside, no limit

defining lack, no great wall of absence. This is not to suggest however, that she/it fails to recognize the power of transgression where desire is its own worst enemy, for she/it is not blind to the fact that, as Lyotard remarks:

"One must realize that representing desire, putting on stage, in a cage, in prison, into a factory, into a family, being boxed in are desired, that domination and exclusion are desired; that extreme intensities are instantiable in these assemblages too." [Libidinal Economy p.12]

Thinking desire through the cyborg (using the cyborg virus as a critical tool), allows us to pose the body in terms of multiplicity and becoming, and as cyberfeminist, to question what is at stake in strategies of becoming that privilege the notion of "becoming-woman" as their starting point. It is important, given the exposition of the nature of transgression above, to examine both the basis and the consequences (for desiring bodies of all kinds) of following the kind of line espoused here by Deleuze and Guattari:

"[B]ecoming-woman, more than any other becoming, possesses a special introductory power; it is not so much that women are witches, but that sorcery proceeds by way of this becoming-woman." [D&G. 1000 Plateaus. p.248]

"Woman" has a long history of close association with processes of bodily becomings, her lack of bodily integrity endowing her with the dynamic potential for transmutation upon the boundary (in terms of both form and matter) of what it is to be human. The role of "Woman", as logical operator in transcendental systems of philosophy has however, excluded women from that productive space whose bridging of the abyss between the real and the ideal, has maintained Man in a position of mastery over all non-human (in)determinations of substance.

The operation of "Woman" as the silent groundwork of male subjectivity and the condition of possibility for his history denies in principle that women, as women, be allowed access to the passage of the feminine. Access for women in general can be permitted only on condition of the assumption of a female subjectivity constructed (Adam and Eve fashion) out of the body of male subjectivity, thus relinquishing any claim to an originary relation to the symbolic function of "Woman".<sup>2</sup> Rosi Braidotti remarks of female subjectivity:

"The truth of the matter is: one cannot deconstruct a subjectivity one has never been fully granted; one cannot diffuse a sexuality which has historically been defined as dark and mysterious... The fragmentation of the self being woman's basic historical condition,...we are left



with the option of theorizing a general 'becoming-woman' for both sexes, or else of flatly stating that women have been postmodern since the beginning of time." [Men in Feminism. p.237]

The point is that women have little to do with the philosophical creation of "Woman", existing neither in the realm of the sacred (as fully fledged Goddesses) or the profane (as bestially carnassial witches). Partially-formed hybrids, women are always in the process of becoming. In becoming-woman however, they risk falling into a teleology of Man by making female subjectivity the new (differing but ultimately the same) universal starting point. There cannot be another molar subject-form named woman that is not created in reactive opposition to, and thus reliant upon, the biopic of Man; another son of god, another little man. Women, in entering into becoming-woman through the strategic assembly of subjectivity, must first become like-Man, and this they can never succeed in, for women in relation to the Man-form are always monstrosities:

"Women excel in fickleness, inconstancy, absence of thought and logic, and incapacity to reason. Without doubt there exist some distinguished women, very superior to the average man, but they are exceptional as the birth of any monstrosity,

as, for example, of a gorilla with two heads; consequently we may neglect them entirely."

[Gustave Le Bon, in Gould's The Mismeasurement of Man p.104-5]

"Deep meditation and a long-sustained reflection are noble but difficult, and do not well-befit a person in whom unconstrained charms should show nothing else than a beautiful nature. Laborious learning or painful pondering, even if a woman should greatly succeed in it, destroy the merits that are proper to her sex,... A woman who has a head full of Greek, like Mme Dacier, or carries on fundamental controversies about mechanics, like the Marquise de Chatelet, might as well have beard; for perhaps that would express more obviously the mien of profundity for which she strives." [Kant. Observations on the Beautiful and Sublime p.78]

Remarks of this nature are hardly less common in our day than they have been in ages gone by, and yet, as Donna Haraway points out:

"Monsters have always defined the limits of community in Western imaginations." [Simians, Cyborgs and Women p.180]

Woman produced unproblematically through a process of feminization of the male-form (the positing of the female subject) does not however take up the power offered by monstrosity. She will ultimately be cast in the representational form of a female Frankenstein with her Dad's features; a being that transgresses rather than transforming the Law under whose prescription she is constructed.

Before moving on to address the possibility of re-configuring the becoming-woman of women through an ontology of becoming-cyborg, we must however explore what is meant by "women" as a determinative category of being in general.

8. The Transcendental function of "Woman" and the  
Sex/Gender distinction.

Criteria for determining what it is to be a woman abound:

1. anatomical (genital) female; having vagina not penis.
2. biological (reproductive) female; having womb not testes.
3. scientific (chromosomal) female; having xx not xy chromosomes.
4. medical (hormonal) female; producing oestrogen not testosterone.
5. neurological female; having a particular brain organization.<sup>3</sup>

There is another set of criteria playing the same role as those in 1-5, but following a historical and sociological rather than biological account of the division of the sexes. The most definitive of these are: (i) Economic female; women as the part-time under-paid class. (ii) Social female; women as the mothers and carers whose place is in the home.

6. feminine female (psychological or behavioral); manifesting traits that are passive not aggressive, maternal not paternal, caring not rational.

None of these definitions is clearcut, nor can they, either alone or in combination, account for all those who claim to be or are designated women, furthermore, many who are denied

this designation fall into one or many of the female sides of the categories as listed. There is, of course, a missing category:

7. transcendent (or symbolic) female (divine, imaginary, elemental, spiritual, mythical); Ideal not Real.<sup>4</sup>

It is to a large extent through this last, which entails the transcendental use, that is the abstraction and idealization, of the determinations in 6, that the idea of the female-ness finds its model. Such articulation is not straightforward however, as it involves a further relation to categories 1-5. That is to say, in the manifestation (or concretization) of the feminine female through adoption of the unrealizable ideal of the transcendent female, there is implied a relation between this feminine and its specular equivalent at 1-5; gender, transcendentally legitimated by the ideal of Woman, physically validated through scientific and medical exclusive disjunctions.

The problemmatization of this equivalence has been made manifest particularly over the past forty years with the growing evidence of people with androgen insufficiency syndrome (re.1), female testosees (re.2 and 4), biological males with xx chromosomes (re.3), as well as an increase in the visibility of cross-dressing, and the availability of medical procedures for "sex-change" operations. On the social

side, there has been exponential growth in the participation of women in high paid work, a move in industry in favour of part-time and home-based workers (re.i), and on the home front, a radical change in the traditional family structure (re.ii). In addition to these there has also been witnessed in literary and philosophical circles a renewed interest in the concept of intellectual feminization. The traditional move from the transcendental category (6) to application through the ideational parameters of the transcendent (7), to its specular equivalent (1-5), is challenged in many of these developments as in the practice of becoming-woman where one begins with an elision of the disjunctive determinations of 1-5.

On the basis of the above, we may assert that the feminized male who claims to enter into becoming-woman by means of a privileged access to its transcendental determination, is doing nothing more than re-asserting his power over the transcendental; his possession of the mark of the phallus whose ideational construct (7) enables him to appropriate the disjunction (6) as transcendental idea, which is, for him, a totality (a community) of his own making.<sup>5</sup>

The problem of the manner of the self re-positioning of feminized males in relation to becoming-woman furthermore, requires that we examine the implicit division assumed to

exist between sex and gender (in the articulation of 6 through the twin series at 1-5/i,ii). According to most gender theorists, the transcendental determinations (6) are made transcendent on the basis of either sex or gender. In the former case, the transcendental idea is materially constitutive of its equivalent (at 1-5), whereas in the latter, the idea is manifested through fixed power relations (of the type i and ii). What this means is that where division in terms of sex is deemed originary, determinations at the biological level (1-5) will be held to reflect the transcendental idea of the feminine (6); where gender is the crucial factor however, biological determinations will function merely as adjuncts to a second series disjunctions (type i,ii) based upon historical, economic, familial and other power relations.

The sex/gender distinction is further complicated by competing theories of essentialism and constructivism. Neither of these terms can be used unproblematically, and whilst, in general, their division remains based upon the privileging of either nature or nurture, their underlying evaluative criteria (especially in terms of their universality and necessity) are still hotly contested. It is none-the-less possible to make the general observation that those theorists privileging sexual difference as fundamental, will hold some sort of essentialist position with regard to

the biological or developmental nature of the female, whereas those preferring an account of difference on the basis of gender will follow a historical and/or sociological constructivist account. The interdependence of these two positions, in allowing for fixity on the one (essential) side and movement on the other (constructed and thereby inessential) side, (whichever criteria is held to be determinative), and the battles for supremacy between the two, tends to obscure the basic fact that so long as there is held to be some *a priori* factor in the division of sexual beings, the hierarchical legitimation through the relation of 1-5/i,ii-6-7 will be left unexamined. One might even go so far as to assert that it is by way of the tensile connection between sex and gender that subsumption under a transcendental principle is preserved,<sup>6</sup> a principle that will then produce a construction of gender regardless of whether or not the link with sex is maintained. Hence the popularity of gender rather than sex-based studies in a cultural climate where a bodies sex is often indeterminate.<sup>7</sup> On this reading, it is only the continuation of the enforced link between the two constructions of sex and gender (and their independent realities), that allows for 7 to retain its position of mastery over bodies.

The distinction between these two categories of sex and gender can, of course, be grossly misleading. The use of the



word "sex" in such contexts almost always implies an *a priori* category, medically verifiable, concretely experiencable, and exclusively maintained (either this or not this, A or not-A, penis or no penis), although the criteria for verifiability is kept ambiguous. There are no criteria for verifying the accurate categorization of an already sexed being, the doctors (and later the birth certifiers) word is final, "its a boy!". The insubstantiality of the criteria upon which the initial division between the sexes (the naming of an individual) is made is, however, camouflaged in the texts of many gender theorists, where "sex" is uncritically assumed as grounding all further divisions, and is underpinned by an undisclosed allegiance to heterosexuality; community of disjunctive sexes.

Where the term "sex" has multiple and different meanings, and is ultimately reliant upon an undisclosed criteria, and in theories where sex is unspecified, the relation between sex and gender is at once both a motivated and arbitrary one. Hence we will move to differentiate sex- the act, from gender- the classification, on the basis of the qualifier being used for gender differentiation (this term now being used to account for 1-5,i,ii), which may or may not indicate a dependency of one upon the other.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the profusion of gender systems--gender by clothing,

gender by divine right, gender by lottery--it is the system of gender by biology (1-5) that Western civilization continues to bow down to. The extent to which our own culturally specific folk beliefs about biology saturate our view of gender, providing us with many potentially illusory truths we hold to be self evident is, however, rarely discussed. The acclaimed supremacy of biology, which accords biological gender superiority over other gender constructions by calling it "sex", is rarely made explicit in the texts of gender theory where, as has been suggested earlier, it is more likely to be couched in terms of "essence". In many such accounts the (theoretically) reversible roles of sex and gender become the coinage of a modernist diagramatics of signification. Here the initial sex-gender connection is what becomes manifest later in life, in and through socialization. This process is not, however, progressive in any straightforwardly linear sense, for entry into socialization occurs by way of a primary marking that becomes its own signified. Whether the initial 'sex' (biological gender naming)--gender system connection is maintained or disconnected is merely a matter of whether one chooses to follow an essentialist or constructivist position, it does not alter the mark/marking (the two are not distinct) itself.

When a sexual being refuses their gender allocation, what

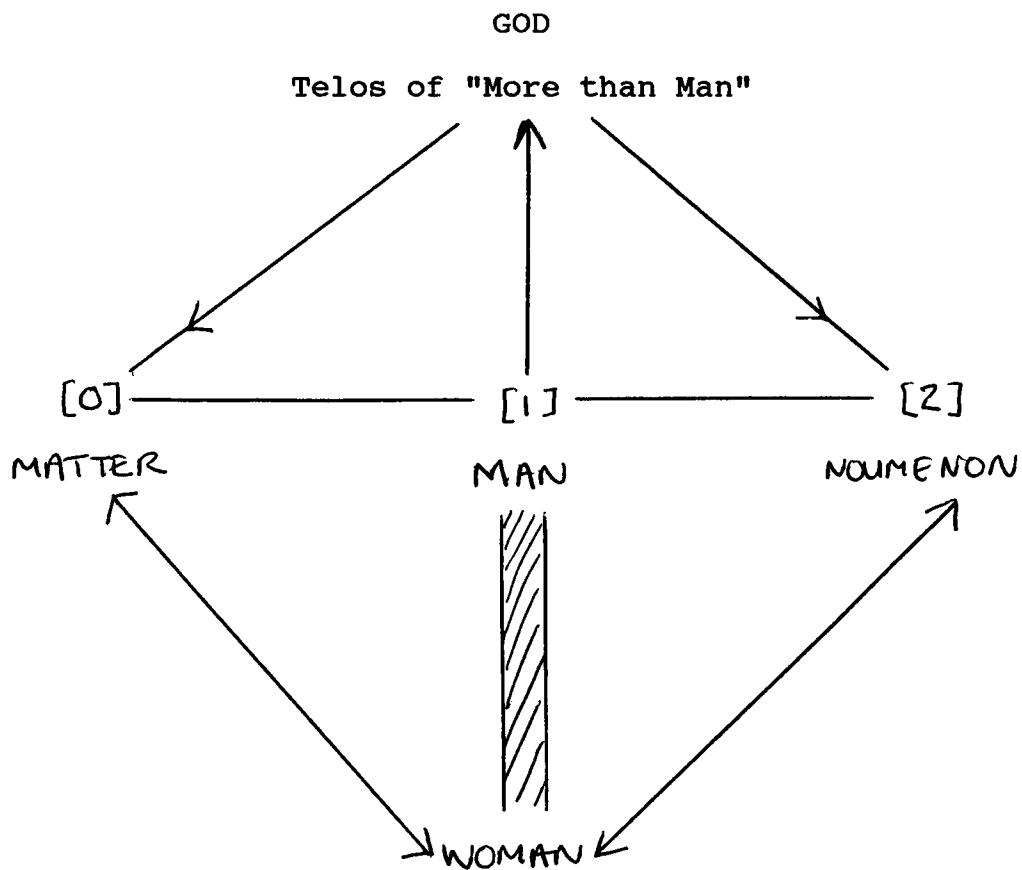
occurs is a sundering of the signifying relationship of sex and gender and a freeing up of the body as a stage for the creative forces of desire. Sex, as an act, preference and orientation, becomes differentiated from a governing gender system, thus collapsing the institutional sex/gender relation (whose mutually dependent structure assures its stability through referred signification) onto an arbitrary gender code with no access to its transcendent model through the transcendental idea of exclusive disjunction. The rejection of binary demarcations in becoming-woman that is a move into trans-gendering or poly-sexuality, defies the heterosexual telos of being for the human species. Rather than emptying sexuality of its difference and richness, as many feminist theorists claim, such disinvestment of the gender system allows desire to be reinvested on an intensive libidinal scale without measure or norm (rather than its being retained within the exclusivity and repeatability of a male economy of the mirrored Other). Instituting a break in the coding that binds sexuality to the system of enforced binary gender, moreover, allows a critical distance to be instantiated between the (indeterminate) female and the transcendental function of becoming-woman (as both history and process) opening up strategies for de- and re-codification of the body in becoming -woman -cyborg.<sup>5</sup>

## 9. Woman as Transcendent: a re-telling of the Myth.

As illegitimate transcendental function of the female (that is, as transcendent), Woman is outside time and can have no history, only myths. Man, on the other hand, is well-documented; his growth, his successes and failures, his promise, his enlightenment, the death of his god and of his ego. There is but one time and it is the time of Man. But as to how this time is constructed, as to the permanent unconditioned upon which transcendental determination makes possible its reproduction and continuation, this is a matter concerning Woman. Woman as matter and noumenon, Nature and Other, sacred and profane. Woman as that which enables reality to be divided in two, and which is the doubleness of nature; where Man = approaching 1, Woman = 0 and Woman = 2, that is,  $1 < \text{woman} < 2$  (woman is both less than and more than one).<sup>9</sup>

Woman is not human. For man, women are never Woman enough. He chases her through the structure built to try and contain her 0-2-0-2-0 trying to make 1.<sup>10</sup> Whereas men may work towards the destiny of Man, of whole number 1, (of being, in Kant's terms "more than man"), for those named women there is an unbreachable chasm between what they are as desiring beings and that which defines them in essence. Women's destiny is

not and cannot be Woman, for Woman is not a future predicate of any female (whatever the gender criteria used) and is not plottable upon a progressive scale towards enlightenment of the species.<sup>11</sup> The species, the history of humanity, is teleonomic and it is male.



This is not to say that women have not been marked as human, on the contrary, it is precisely in the shortcomings that mark women's distance from her transcendent given (unrealisable) identity structuring her opposition to the male, wherein she has been confined. Each time she tries to escape the demands of the unrepresentable ideal her becoming is appropriated, given a telos and that telos domesticated in the name of order and control. And so it continues, each becoming re-plotted as a logical linear progression whose process may be reduced to a relation of totemic or symbolic correspondence. This is how women are made. He made her a bitch, chick, fox, pussycat for not becoming-animal; he made her a babe, a baby-doll, a virgin, for not becoming-child; he made her a breast and nipple, a whore, for not becoming-machine.

Such determination occurs on the basis of heterosexuality founded in homo-economicus, producing the defining conditions for domestication out of a missionary position. The ritual of a torn maidenhead; a discovery more of and through poetry--in the voices of genius, seed of the gods--than medical science, although there too. What occurs in the formation and eruption of the hymen is not the transition from one (kind of) space into another, nor is it simply the exposition of an unrepresentable mark of the passage between silence and voice. It concerns rather, the inscription of a passage between two

laws; the carefully prescribed route that allows for a law to be passed from Father to Son without being broken as such (that is, without alteration of its juridical authority, its legislative power).<sup>12</sup> Immaculate conception makes possible the realization of the law of one domain through its manifestation in another. Through the ritual of defloration Woman is voided in transcendence, absence of the membrane (not its sundering) signifying an unrepresentable materiality that can be worshipped as passage, reappropriated and reversed in the form of the phallic mother. Cultural construction of the hymen in women locates their fundamental Lack.

Woman as Divine is not a state but an onanistic abstraction-- "Mnemosyne"--mother of the muses, uterine passage of poetizing. Genius orphans, products of immaculate conception, of a name (of all the names in history), become deflorators of the second order, shedding tear-shaped petals rather than spilling blood. Every mother's son, sons of bitches, sons become bitches; defloration returned to the first order through immaculate conception marking a deprivation or theft of a material mark of purity, itself a fiction ensuring transcendental production. (A long line of French male intellectuals queuing up to become-woman.) Each new poet-philosopher guaranteeing their position as last in the line, attempting to create new non-linear (non-reproductive) lines,

a production of Nazarene monsters suckled on sperm.

"Mine is the century of Death. Mine is the century of male-birthed children, precocious with radiation."

[Phyllis Chester. About Men]

"[T]he history of philosophy as a kind of ass-fuck, or, what amounts to the same thing, an immaculate conception. I imagined myself approaching an author from behind and giving him a child that would indeed be his but would nevertheless be monstrous." [Deleuze. "I have nothing to admit", p.12 *Pourparlers*.]

The role of the immaculated son is to become-Woman in a practice for the fulfillment of (male) desire,

"to knock down the thin walls, the clefts, the partitions in order to occupy all the places at once...to swallow oneself, to touch oneself, to deliver oneself, to give birth to oneself and to give oneself one's own...to fuck oneself by flowing out of oneself: *je m'ec, je m'enc*." [Genet. Thief's Journal]



To become phallic mother by cross-dressing in an economy of the same generates history by representing its own defloration, giving birth to itself in order to have itself in its own image.

"Is there not a desire on the part of western man to be sodomised by Woman?" [Lyotard. Reader. p.115]

Here is the myth and here too Hollywood's (re)productions that bind the body to genealogy and immaculate conception, not in the form of xenogenetics but through teleonomic morphology.

Cyberfeminism is the name of the anti-myth (it does not deny myth but utilizes it in strategic resistance to--feeding it back upon--the history it creates), it is a practice of becoming-woman that is poly-sexual and trans-gendered (or post-gendered). Cyberfeminism instigates a hybrid revolution, a "genderfuck" that does not birth monsters compromising xenogenesis. The cyberfeminist hymen is a tactical insurgence in cyberflesh. It does not reverberate in empty space to the limit, the meeting point, of God and man (as the Lack/Law shared out between them) in the song of the hymenal, universal voice and attunement [*allgemeine Stimme, Stimmung*] of sensus communis.<sup>13</sup> It is a viscous screen--veil--spittle-

-that sticks in the throat when men attempt to name God, their Father, preventing the throat from opening and the mouth from forming the vowel that would enunciate His name.<sup>14</sup> Appropriation of a fiction, virtual hymen, cyborg tissue that seals (and steals from) the *stoma/Stimme*<sup>15</sup> preventing the expression (lactation) of any fixed meaning filtering through or seeping out of an unconditioned Mother. A device leaking toxins<sup>16</sup> - antithetical to the dream/nightmare of performing cunnilingus on the Goddess/Mother - milk of Aphrodite that loosens tongues by eating them and destroying their articulate citadels.

The process of becoming-woman is obviated by a fiction, a tale that can maintain or redescribe boundary conditions depending on the power it is accorded as virtual fiction. Woman operates both as a threat to the law and its condition, its mediator, its Styx. The bad boys (whose names are unimportant) invoke the name that constructs them, regurgitating hymens, in the hope of becoming Demon Nazarene.

"Mysterious dame, That ne're art call'd but when  
the dragon woom [vomit] of Stygian darknes spets  
her thickest gloom" [Milton. Comus. p.134]

The Stygian is indefinable, it lies in-between realms, it is the passage; liberating and deadly, poison and nectar, fluid

of that name "Woman", poem penned by mortal men (in the guise of demigods), impossible river poem of an impossible body (Immaculate conception). Stygian = Nitrohydrochloric acid: A combination of *Nitro*, the necessary constituent of every organized body, too much of which leads to delirium, rapture of the deep, laughter; of *Hydro*, water (especially the serous fluid which accumulates, engorging and making diseased the organized parts/organs); and *Chloride*, a colourless but smelly gas. It is *mineral acid*--the inbetween--product of the bowels of the earth, divined by the rod.<sup>17</sup>

The immaculated sons with their fleshy rods decapitate themselves and revel in their own sacrificial castration. But in their greediness for the whip and the knife they forget their prophylactics. There will always be seepage from the transcendent, even when it has no name. This excess is taken up by those who would utilize its logic in their own name-sake. The virus encoded in the name of Woman is activated...potential to become... by voiders, in those carriers named women. You can only subvert the law when you use the (un)safe word, when your lips are open to the Styx.

The cyber-feminist ontology goes beyond the myth it takes up, fracturing the real mirrors of male authority, control and juridical mastery, and the integrity of the body. The postmodern world is post-human, system becoming process. The

viral coding of Woman in 'women' is effected not independently of a history of becomings. Lines of flight mutate in the aftermath of becomings that have yet to happen as such.

## 10. Postmodernity and the problem of becoming-(woman).

Processes of becoming pose the greatest threat to a status quo based upon the integrity of the body and anti-viral policing agents don't give up easily. As was the case with the Inquisition, protectionist panic programs have some success, in our era ironically transforming Stygian fluid into the missing matter of technological society, which becomes the emancipated rhetorical centre of the lost subject of desire after desire. It's logo is simple - loss, lack, crisis, panic, transforming into loss-gain, lack-excess, crisis-stasis, panic-coma - it's body is bulimic rather than anorexic, wanting everything and needing nothing. Its hustings announce, through a rhetoric of clean bodily fluids, a prophylactic covering to protect against the disappearance of the classical body into what the small print calls a detritus of toxic bodies, fractal subjectivity, cultural dyslexia, and the pharmakon.

This reactive positioning of humanities 'other' in the productions of electronic media and/or scientific technological development, is generally developed in three ways (adopted independently or in combination): 1) The attempt to re-establish an enlightenment project through the extension of identity boundaries providing new categories for

human subjectivity. 2) The demand for a rejection of current trends and a return to a lost subjectivity. 3) The forcing of humanity into dissolution and nihilism. The first of these is demonstrated in much feminist political philosophy which would have us merely redraw the boundaries of subjectivity to include women but without altering their basic schemata. The second is most commonly associated with the mourning for a lost *communio* (communitarianism in a full-body) and the oft' heard call to an ethics of justice as a space for the re-birth of humanity. The third is posed in the form of a celebration of apocalypse culture, its most common forms being those of "panic" and "consumer" philosophy. Illustrated here by the Krockers:

"We have reached a fateful turning-point in contemporary culture when human sexuality is a killing-zone, when desire is fascinating only as a sign of its own negation, and when the pleasure of catastrophe is what drives ultramodern culture onwards in its free fall through a panic scene of loss, cancellation and exterminism."

[Krockers. Body Invaders p.13]

The first position tends to fixate upon the re-articulation of Enlightenment prescriptions for the progress of the species, using duplicates of the original diagrams of the subject and a magic marker (to scribble in "WO" every time it

finds "man"). The more adventurous even invent new names for their copies in the hope of miraculating a female community denied in the original form, with names like "sisterhood", "care" and "maternity". Such names, however are the coinage of the dominant economy, and whilst their use at a local level may invest particular political projects, their universalization merely crafts ever more decorous cages in which (state) subjectivity can be produced. Demanding female subjectivity means engaging with the structures rather than relations of power, structures based upon the masculinist model of community in the full body of the socius. These concretizations of power, especially juridical models, do not simply represent subjects, but produce them. Once produced, moreover, the exclusionary practices employed to maintain the social bodies integrity are effectively hidden beneath its politics (and to some extent its aesthetics). Should this first position be allowed to work itself through, its destiny is assured in the birth and death of a female subjectivity that will always be masculinized and legitimate political policies based on "post-feminism"; ultimately mirroring the mourning over the father's body of community (this time the mother's) as was witnessed in section four.

In examination of the third alternative, it quickly becomes clear that there cannot be sustained for long such frenetic jubilation in exorbitant nihilism, without an eventual

decline into either mysticism of a metaphoricity of simulation (a position between 2 and 3). This latter position is suggested in the writing of Jean Baudrillard:

"We are looking for a reduction into partial objects and the fulfillment of desire in the technical sophistication of the body. In itself changed by sexual liberation, the body has been reduced to a division of surfaces, a proliferation of multiple objects wherein its finitude, its desirable representation, its seduction are lost. It is a metastatic body, a fractal body which can no longer hope for resurrection". [Baudrillard]

What links these three postmodern positions is their seeming failure to take on board the creative aspect of desiring production. The body need not be either forced back onto a transcendent plane of a Kantian ideal of *sensus communis* (guaranteeing stability through an ethics of justice and reciprocal association), nor deconstructed and scattered across a politically, economically, culturally differentiated field. This last, as has been said, tending to revert to the former orientation around lack, or else reducing desire to appropriation of a bodily-becoming that is exchangeable at the level of appearance.

We can chart the failure of these postmodern maps of desire



on the level of the body by plotting their trajectories as diagrams of becoming, becomings of the body that fail because they either repress and/or domesticate desire, accrediting a teleology to the creative process itself. For as Deleuze and Guattari point out:

"What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes... [becoming] exists only as taken up in another becoming of which it is the subject, and which coexists, forms a block, with the first." [1000 Plateaus. p.238]

What is also required (as we recall from an earlier section), is to look at creative-productive processes of becoming and question whether or not the access to these is open, or is specific to the construction of a certain kind of subjectivity. What shape is the "block" that is formed such that it may be connected up to...(and to what extent is its past a history of patterns)? Is becoming not to some extent always reactive in relation to a certain social production of identity issuing out of an oppositional positing of the non-human? If this is so, we must then ask in what sense beings who are located in the virtual space of the non-human are themselves able to access a process of becoming without first entering into the territory of stable (domesticated) becomings. Such an enquiry is necessary if we are to

understand the specific way in which becoming has opened up the potential for creative evolution in our era through the privileging of the female/feminine. Whether in the field of anthropology, biology, market economics or philosophy, becoming-woman has become the launch pad for becomings of all kinds, an event which is not independent of an evolutionary past. We must begin again here from Deleuze and Guattari's claim that:

"becoming-woman, more than any other becoming, possesses a special introductory power; it is not so much that women are witches, but that sorcery proceeds by way of this becoming-woman." [D&G. A Thousand Plateaus p.248]

Institutional mechanisms set up to manage the failures of human bodily-becomings through transcendent imagery and domestication (particularly well-documented by Foucault) have proliferated to such an extent that in the 20th century we are confronted with a fractured subject spread across an increasingly frustrated field of normalizing territorializations. The disintegration of the State has only added to the fear that the physical body has finally gone beyond all hope of unification under a single structural organic system capable of pursuing a particular configuration of progress in the name of human destiny. There are no new myths, no consolidated ideologies, no mountain peaks in the

postmodern landscape, only a mogul-field where the body-count is multiplied to infinity.<sup>18</sup>

To assume that this so called "bad dream of infinity" occurs only at the level of the appearance of bodies in their institutional simulations is however, to re-mystify the conditions for their production; to ensure that becoming-woman operates transcendently as an introduction to sorcery; traditionally in the form of Mnemosyne, virgin/whore and phallic mother, now as seduction of the "feminine". This is Baudrillard's position when he claims that:

"the passage toward the feminine is contemporaneous with the passage from determination to general indetermination."

[Seduction. p.5]

This use of the feminine is no more than a return to a mode of thought where Woman is a code legitimating reproduction; the inscription of an impossible ideal in the teleonomic morphology of male production, where,

"To produce is to materialize by force what belongs to another order, that of the secret and of seduction." [ibid. p.24]

Thus, remarks Baudrillard,

"they [women] do not understand that seduction

represents mastery over the symbolic universe."

[ibid]

The lineage here is not difficult to trace, we need but cast a glance back to the works of Jacques Lacan:

"the fact that femininity finds its refuge in this mask, by virtue of the fact of the [repression] inherent in the phallic mark of desire, has the curious consequence of making virile display in the human being itself seem feminine." [The Signification of the Phallus p.291]

It seems clear that the most promising way to make Woman function as a device for becoming requires it [Woman] infiltrate the body that cannot realize (virilize, domesticate and/or repress) it, that is, the bodies of women, where it cannot function transcendently but only as decoding mechanism.<sup>19</sup> In this sense then, it is not possible for becoming-woman to operate independently of the death of Woman. The task is to escape the pattern  $0 - 2^+ - 0 - 2^+ - 0$ , by infecting the body (approaching singularity) with decoding sequences (producing bodies with  $n$  sexualities). The question facing women infected with this viral contagion is whether it is possible to kill that which operates potentially as a decoder of transcendental structures that have positioned her in opposition to human subjectivity, or whether it is necessary to allow the decoding to become

productive within that oppositional structure, that is, to create a female subjectivity (as equivalent to the fictional and failed One) precisely in order that it too be annihilated. It is proposed that this notion of bringing about a second and this time "female" Enlightenment is precisely to fail to use the potential of approaching the singularity of being out on the edge that is implicit in the problematic impossibility of becoming a woman. This is not however to suggest that we either ignore or attempt to cure women's bodies of viral contagion, on the contrary, the project at hand must be one of developing the potential of Woman as de-coding mechanism and feeding it into previously regulated spaces (non-places of female activity and commercium amongst women), freeing up becomings of all kinds.

Judith Butler makes the important point that,

"it may be time to entertain a radical critique that seeks to free feminist theory from the necessity of having to construct a single or abiding ground which is invariably contested by these identity positions or anti-identity positions that it invariably excludes. Perhaps the problem is more serious. Is the construction of the category of women as a coherent and stable subject an unwitting regulation and reification of gender relations? And is it not such a reification

precisely contrary to feminist aims? To what extent does the category of women achieve stability and coherence only in the context of the heterosexual matrix?" [Gender Trouble p.5]

Clearly there remains a feminist political project to be pursued, but, in taking up Butlers' point, to concentrate this project upon the birth of a female subjectivity, that is, to make heterosexual (homo-economic) representation the sole focus of the activity, would be to reconstitute the old, merely reformulated relations of domination and exclusion.

Production is the immanent principle of desire. But desire effects not just a desiring-production, it is also the agent of social production that domesticates desire by way of repression and containment. Social production in the postmodern world however, fails to police the boundaries of becoming, for it has forgotten its own myths and relies upon the assumption of an ungendered nonproductive starting point. That is, the mode of collapse (re. anti-production), always assumed from the outset in the formation of an inner/outer distinction, cannot accommodate the viral contagion of woman which works against social production insofar as it embodies its (impossible) conditions for actualization in the flesh of the women it inhabits.

Baudrillard's becoming-feminine is not simply a becoming

effected from a ungendered, sexless position reliant upon the construction of woman as other - where the ritual passage of stable domesticated (failed) becomings held erect by transcendental structures folds in upon itself, upon the neutral male body it was created to support -but might even be deemed sexist in its denial of the potential for the realization of woman in the bodies of women, and in its insistence upon their silence. Baudrillard's "femininity" is a masculinist ('male') disease, expressing the critical state of the postmodern condition. Not only does it have nothing to do with women and what they can become, it perpetuates the century-old mental habit which consists in assigning to the "feminine" disorders or insufficiencies pertaining to the male.

Baudrillard's subject of desire is constituted around lack insofar as it stands in opposition to the loss of identity through confrontation with the sight of death (the abyss, meaninglessness, etc.), through which identity is formulated. It is not however the promise of death as such lurking behind the veil of appearances that allows the Baudrillardian subject to get a grip on itself, but the threatening shadow cast over the Mall of appearances that is both the mark of, and is itself, the abyss. The transcendental, death, woman, all are projected as commodities in the Mall (which is not, ultimately so different from the theatrical stage of

representation it claims to replace). The real and the virtual are the same, everything is appearance. You can buy anything, wear anything, become anything. Only Baudrillard leaves out the small print, you can only ever play at becoming, no matter what rules are set for the game in hand, and no matter that they can be altered as often and as radically as you like, the fact remains that they only operate when constrained within an economy of play. The economy of play is constituted by a grid, a back projection upon the papered-over abyss between the real and the virtual. This is not the actualization of lines of flight, nothing so dangerous. The threat, the panic, the apocalyptic vision here is only an advert, a glossy packaging on a product that promises stability, identity and safety, by way of an acceptance of vulnerability. Such vulnerability is of course itself prescribed within the mainframe of the game, the stakes, the risks you can take, and their street-cred value, all of which is already designated. Moreover, if you up the stakes, cut through the paper, uncover the abyss, set a dare, the masculine (that masculine that is feminized in seduction) disappears altogether; the masculine subject dissolves, not in symbiosis with a becoming-feminine, but into total redundancy.

Baudrillard is the master of consumer philosophy, an expert shopper, accepting the equation of identity with negative



difference in his stride and confidently asserting that (in consequence), if identity has no positivity, it does not exist, it is an empty category, thus everything is undifferentiated, including sign systems. One abstract category inexorably slides into the next, in a playing out of the specious conceptual reversibility inherent to oppositional difference. Naturally, at the point of viscous circularity, the only alternative to cynicism ("everything is everything else, so nothing matters and I'll do what I please") is seduction: affirming the play of empty signifiers, surrendering oneself to the allure of the sign. Unfortunately, in an information economy signs cost money. Baudrillardian seduction of the feminine becomes the kleptomaniac face of pathological consumerism; lost in the Mall and penniless into the bargain.

Of Baudrillard's followers, the Krockers are at once the most promising and the most disappointing in their championing of the indeterminacy of the body, particularly as construed in the guise of cybernetic cyborg. For them, sexuality especially is distilled into the meaninglessness of transparency and surface where genitalia are no more than special effects and gender is less a metaphor than a saleable attitude. Their unsuccessful attempts to bring into being of the emerging body of the cyborg results in a trivializing of desire that places them back in the Mall, queuing up with the

pre-adolescents in *Next* and *The Gap*. The champions of techno-jargon seem often to be the first in line on MacDonald's VR machines, but are rarely prepared to invent or even experiment with new programmes (that Wall Street hasn't yet accorded street value). Their voices resound through the length and breadth of the Malls, proclaiming the coming of the cyborg in order to retain a notion of meat in relation (though not symbiosis) with the machine-mind. It is only in this way that they can hold onto an empirical subjectivity (necessary for justice and descent burials), the unity of which will be retained at the level of transcendent production. Scott Bukatman, puts it thus:

"The body must become cyborg to retain its presence in the world, resituated in technological space and refigured in technological terms. Whether this represents a continuation, a sacrifice, a transcendence, or a surrender of 'the subject' is not certain." [Bukatman Terminal Identity p.247]

The marriage band of panic and consumer philosophies decorated with a certain nostalgic technoshamanist symbolism is worn upon the fingers of paranoid theorists and egotistical virtual reality gurus alike. Of the latter, Howard Rheingold is probably the most offensive (yet banal)

with his vision of a virtual reality future that is no more than a return to pre-C18th spatial forms of utopia-- spaces representing ideal and universal forms of human association and collectivity--alternative realities in a world gone wrong. As with his philosophical counterparts, Rheingold's error is to start out from what he sees as the damaged or decayed state of modern democratic and community life, an account based upon the assumption of an originary lack. It is in reaction to this scene of devastation that Rheingold posits cyberspace's potential as "one of the informal public places where people can rebuild the aspects of community that were lost when the malt shop became the mall" [Virtual Communities. p.25-26] What is recreated, recaptured and redeemed is the mythic community of the social in-common and with it those values and ideals considered lost to the new techno-(un)social world.<sup>20</sup>

"We need computer networks to recapture the sense of cooperative spirit....While we've been gaining new technologies, we've been losing our sense of community." [Virtual Communities. p.110]

For Rheingold, there is solidarity in cyberspace in the extension of the security of small-town *Gemeinschaft* to the transnational scale of the global village, which brings with it, of course, virtual anti-viral policing agencies. Virtual ideology in such hands perpetuates the age old ideal of

communications utopia in the shared consciousness and mutual understanding of the consensual communitarian body, a neutralizing space reflecting the desire to control and to create security and order in the name of self-repression (another name for preservation of the subject).

Omnipotence phantasies at the individual level and familial communitarianism at the group and collective level; regression and transcendence, redemption through totalization of childhood, cultural regeneration through regression: These are the functions of Rheingold's techno-communitarianism, the image of virtual *Gemeinschaft*, an electronic variant of the Rousseauesque dream of a transparent society in which the ideal of community expresses a longing for harmony among persons, for consensus and mutual understanding. It is a social vision that is grounded in a primal sense of enclosure and wholeness. In this electronic community, virtual reality functions as a neutralizing space for the domestication of desiring production, a domain of order, refuge and withdrawal.

The glue, the sticky ethico-politicism that binds much postmodern and techno-VR culture and theory together is a belief in the mastery of the abstract schema in the resolution of commercium into a unit (or unity). What is overlooked however, is that the moment at which linkage or

coupling breaks down and the thought of lack takes hold is not the removal of a part of what constitutes the linkage, but the conceptualization that what is at stake is a connection (requiring no imposed schematization for its synthesis into the general commercium).

Linkage or coupling occurs as inclusive synthesis, where a whole is broken down, disassembled and sensitized to the singularities of its parties, resonating with them, combining potentials and creating new ones rather than subtracting potentials already clamoring to express themselves. This process is thwarted by virtue of the enforcement of overlayed social categories; a repressive mechanism of reinforcement and amplification of the body's whole attractors, expressed as authorized social categories to be in or conjoined with (man/woman, husband/wife, boss/employee, etc.). In this scenario of stability, coordinates are set and entropic equilibrium rules.

Identity and identity-loss correspond to being in or slipping out of one's assigned category and the paths through the social field associated with it; they are the end effects not the foundation, of the process of individuation. What is founding is the body's nonidentical threshold states, its potential for becomings-.

Man/woman, as one of the interlocking sets of coordinates on the categorical grid defining the socialized human being, are usually taken as equivalent yet empty categories constituted solely out of opposition and designating two poles of the same exclusive disjunction. As has been shown, there is no real body that coincides completely with either category but only approaches it as a limit in terms of engenderment, that is, becoming more or less "feminine/female" or more of less "masculine/male" depending on the degree to which it conforms to the connections and trajectories laid out for it. Insofar as Man and Woman have a reality at all, it is as metaphors, symptoms of sickness, logical abstractions, artificially closed energetic systems revolving around subtypes of each gender category; abstractions of the attractors to which society expects bodies to gravitate (love, school, family, church, etc.).

A body does not *have* a gender, it is gendered. Gender is done unto it by the socius. Sex, on the other hand is a potential for becoming certain kinds of desiring machines through commercium: Entities are not assigned a sexuality but are sexualized in accordance with the bodies they have (which are open to alteration) in their potential for interaction (association, coupling) with other bodies (human, animal, machine, etc.). There are as many sexualities (kinds of sex) as there are modes of association. Whereas gender is a form

of imprisonment, a social functional limitation of a body's connective and transformative capacity; sex is a body's potential, its virtual state.<sup>21</sup>

Thinkers like Baudrillard attempt to have gender master sex in order to stabilize the bodies state and limit its potential to change, to move away from the state of equilibrium. Gendering is used to overlay sex as the process by which a body is socially determined to be determined by biology: social channelization cast as destiny by being pinned to anatomical difference. Doubtless such procedures of tactical mastery have been largely successful in the past, but the categories that legitimate them are themselves in the process of transformation: from physiology to communications engineering, biological determination to evolutionary constraint, organic sex role specification to optimal genetic strategies, gender to irrelevance.

The reason for initially privileging a Deleuzian reading of "becoming-woman" over a Baudrillardian "feminine seduction" should now be clear, for becoming-woman involves carrying the indeterminacy, movement, and paradox of the female stereotype past the point at which it is recuperable by the socius as it presently functions, over the limit beyond which lack of definition becomes the positive power to transform the

boundaries that constrain sex within a point attractor space.

As the categorical grids<sup>22</sup> become dysfunctional in terms of social production, the apparatus of identity is forced beyond the threshold of sameness, into singularity and intensity, a dystopia of hybrid carnal invention. Kate, a postmodern transsexual explains:

"I went from being male to not-male, to female, and now to not-female." [Kate Bornstein. The Last Sex. p.118]

She continues:

"What they do for a M-to-F sex change is cut the penis open, scrape out the inside and then turn it inside out so that the outside of my penis is now the walls of my vagina. The head of my penis is now my cervix. You [female audience] have more sensation in your clitoris than I do because mine is reconstituted from my perineum. It has lots of nerves and is fine, but yours is more sensitive. However, the walls of my vagina are more sensitive than the walls of your vagina." [ibid. p.120]

Although still problematic, this is at least the becoming of a body that differs from itself in that it has no simple history and no linear development from past to future that



can be recounted within the boundaries of traditional category distinctions. It stands at an extreme; it is both a threat and a promise to the "Standard Man-form" wherein bodies and desires are in near-total symbiosis. Its process involves the necessary suicide of both male and female, a suicide that may none-the-less have to be assisted. This does not however lead to undifferentiation, which is not outside but integral to the system of identification (operating from the point of view of a system of difference predicated on equivalence, yielding sameness), it is rather a process of hyperdifferentiation in an irreversibly open system.<sup>23</sup>

Baudrillard, like the Krockers and other purchasers of the "panic body" still operate within the framework of identity, that is within an oppositional framework; identity (negative difference) versus undifferentiation (confusion). They are thus presented with three choices: Becoming the person it is said to be - the slow death of stable equilibrium; opting out of that path, into its opposite - neurosis and eventual breakdown; or shopping-to-be - not exactly mental stability, but not quite breakdown either. The frenzy of the purchasable, potential experienced as infinite choice between having's rather than becomings. The escape route taken by Kate, amongst others, moves beyond this mall-mentality on an exorbital path away from identity and undifferentiation into an unstable equilibrium of continual experimentation and

invention.

At the risk of becoming tedious in repeating the refusal to engage with theories espousing a female subject-position, we must return to the question of access/exit from the phallocratic molar order once more, for Kate, after all, began in becoming with "being male". The problem, as Rosi Braidotti puts it, is that;

"[I]t is as if all becomings were equal, but some were more equal than others." [Braidotti. Nomadic Subjects p.115]

Two movements must be noted where the stake is to make "woman" the referent of the intensity of (an introduction to) all becomings.

The first concerns the historical production and maintenance of "woman" as the basic stratum upon which the multilayered institution of phallogocentric subjectivity is erected; woman as silent presence installing the master in his monologic mode. The second concerns the potential of women, given their seeming indeterminacy in relation to identity-structures, and positioning on the periphery of societal productions of desire, to become.

It is clear that the entry point to becoming is different for "men" and "women", at least as a point of exit from the phallocentric mode. For men, becoming-woman (when it is not

enveloped by becoming-feminine) is a process that, beginning with the deterritorialization of a male subjectivity, dissolves "woman" into the forces that construct her, that is, into the male process of becoming (other). Yet women have no stable identity from which to initiate a process of becoming fluid, they are already (implicated) in becoming. Some feminist philosophers (most notably Irigaray), would claim that women's historical condition is precisely that allusion to a "body without organs" that directs the processes of deterritorialization. This suggests that women cannot construct an other without first becoming subject, the question then is whether becoming necessarily begins from a stable identity or whether it can be initiated from out of a multiplicity that is not posed reactively.

If this latter is possible, then there is no need to posit a female subjectivity as a preparation for becoming, what is at stake is rather an insistence that the philosophical emergence of experimentation with female subjectivity not be divorced from the general trajectory of becoming-woman. Such experimentation is necessary insofar as it is the interaction of identity with subjectivity that spells out the categorical distinction between dimensions of experience that are marked by desire, and therefore the unconscious, and others that are rather subjected to wailful self-regulation. For women to enter into a process of becoming-woman, that is,

to exit from identities based upon human subjectivity and the phallus, implies the transformation of the very structures and images of thought, not just their propositional content. The becoming-woman of women thus offers a more radical challenge to the transformation of categorical structures of thought than the, primarily re-active, becoming-woman of the male, in that it is always in advance of its own sex, that is, it is a becoming post-gendered in process.

Becoming post-gendered occurs not in an a-sexual or non-sexualized space (as is claimed by those feminists who see the alternative to the myth of bi-polar gendered sexuality as androgyny<sup>24</sup>), but in a space of poly-sexuality. This becoming is precisely not a move into androgyny, it is only a move away from those prescribed norms of sexuality (modes of desire) that are dictated by the deterministic categories of male and female (and the appointed sexual preferences that go with them). Or rather, it is a move through the transcendental plane that prescribes these identities in an escape mode that results in the transformation of the categories themselves in a process of deterritorialization. There is no need whatsoever to envisage such movement as a collapse onto an androgenous, non-sexual zone, this becoming does not effect the creation of a molar state, there being no simple point attractor for it to gravitate towards (as there was none for Kate once the process of transsexuality had

fully taken hold). The process of becoming is not teleological in any sense<sup>25</sup>. Deleuze and Guattari again:

"What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes." [D&G. 1000 Plateaus. p.238]

The post-human body-in-becoming striding, skipping and spinning into the millennium incorporates a newly elaborated diagrammatics of desire (desiring production). In the following sections we will map some of the cultural practices of bodily becomings which move us in this direction, namely; transsexuality, as a problematic practice of post-genderment, and sadomasochism, as a practice in boundary manoeuvring and the becoming immanent of the law (in respect of bodies in their integrity).

# 11. Becoming transsexual as a post-gender practice.

R.J. Stoller, (a renowned psychological theorists on transsexuality), asserts that the transsexual condition is a "dysfunction" whose cause can be traced back by the mother. Stoller claims that, "the mother is responsible for her son's transsexual urges", and where the transsexual is deemed a "natural" female, that, "it is the mother who is initially responsible, because she was not a 'good mother' during the first few months of the girl's life". Thus, he writes, "the psychological mechanism is seen as the opposite of male transsexualism: male transsexuals are the product of 'smother love', female transsexuals are the product of maternal neglect." [Stoller in Eskapa's Bizarre Sex. p.284]

Thomas Szasz, a theorist writing against transsexual surgery, although exhibiting a certain degree of sexual prejudice and political paranoia in his attacks upon the transsexual culture, comes closer than Stoller in claiming that it is medical technology and the availability of new surgical techniques which is largely responsible for the "invention" of modern transsexuality. Where Harry Benjamin (the so-called father of transsexual theory) claims that surgery is life-preserving, maintaining that transsexuals will invariably commit suicide without it, Szasz notes that "no one will die as a direct result of a disease invented by the transsexer

Harry Benjamin", suggesting that it is the (the promise or denial of) surgery itself that is often responsible for driving the individual to suicide, and that these procedures are never justified given that "surgical operations creating false males and females are not treatments". [ibid. p.286]

In our account of transsexuality as a post-gendered practice, there is no such substantial difference between concepts of "real" and "fake" sexed and gendered beings (although being able to "pass" in a particular role will become important in what follows). Transsexuality, in the post-human condition is one of the starting points in free-ing up sexuality, where the body poses a threat to the metaphysics of subjectivity and identity politics on the basis of which the concepts of "real" or "natural" males and females are based.

Sexual politics presents us with the opportunity to privilege differences between sexual beings on the basis of their upbringing, sexual orientation and lived experience in general. On the basis of asserting positive sexual difference, disparate groups are able to combine forces in disrupting or overturning the dominant macho heterosexuality of social, political and financial institutions. Unfortunately however, some theorists, especially in the feminist camp, in propounding a political agenda based upon principles either of integration and equality or separation

and equality, tend to revert to a notion of originary sex-gendered difference. As a consequence of such calls to "true", "real" or "natural" binary sex-gender difference, adherents to these theories often refuse to include transsexuals within their politics, and sometimes openly attack transsexuals' attempts to be a part of the anti-masculinist movement. Feminist arguments against the inclusion of transsexuals tend to fall into one of two camps:

1) Radical and/or lesbian separatism, where the aim is to promote so-called "feminine" (positive) values over "masculine". (negative) ones, sometimes to the extent of separating out the sexed-genders as two separate species with different ethical, economic, aesthetic, and political tendencies and requirements. Extreme versions of this position can often seem to be combatting misogyny with androphobia. The objection to transsexuals is that such individuals can never be accredited the status of "womanhood". Why this is the case depends upon the criteria espoused (most commonly essentialist or constructivist). Mary Daly, who grounds womanhood in the mystic heritage of witches and crones, claims that the "feminist soul" is violated "horizontally" by the transsexual, whose purpose (conscious or not) is to "colonize female bodies" [Mary Daly. Gyn/Ecology]. Those with a psychoanalytic background, on the other hand, refer to "womb envy" as the focus of male-to-



female transsexuality, which they then refer back to the masculine trait of acquisition and appropriation. Followers of Andrea Dworkin and other anti-pornography supporters, present a third alternative with their claim that male-to-female transsexuals are nothing more than male abusers who have found a safe way of getting intimate with women by faking membership of the class thereof.

2) Politically oriented liberal femin[in]ists, whose aim is to be accepted into male society on equal terms, extol a "no difference except binary sexual difference" position, and attack anything that might threaten the seeming normalcy of their idealized version of woman as man without penis. For followers of this cause there can be no middle term and no crossing between territories, for the regulations ensuring equality demands the fixed status of those who are to be judged equal to their opposite.

The common factor in these feminist positions lies in the fact that in their attacks upon transsexualism, all concentrate almost exclusively upon the male-to-female model. The views of feminist author Janice Raymond, who writes extensively on transsexuality, does not fit comfortably into any of the positions stated. In her book, The Transsexual Empire, it is female-to-male transsexuals who are accused of blurring the patriarchal bias of sexual difference. She

writes:

"The female-to-male transsexual is the token that saves face for the male "transsexual empire". She is the buffer zone who can be used to promote the universalist argument that transsexualism is supposed to be a "human" problem, not uniquely restricted to men. She is the living proof that some women want the same thing." [The Transsexual Empire p.27]

What is meant here by the "same thing" is left un-articulated by Raymond, but the suggestion seems to be that individuals participating in female-to-male transsexualism manifest the possession of, or desire for the male privilege of being able to be, or to appropriate, all things, including sexual difference. Such privilege, moreover, includes the assumed mastery over all bodies, to the extent that Raymond formulates the main tenet of her book in the assertion that "all transsexuals rape women's bodies."

There is some force in the arguments behind Raymond's assertion, yet the accusation of appropriation of the female category would seem to be more accurately directed against male colonizers of the feminine, such as Derrida and Baudrillard. Insofar as men claim the right to becoming-woman through a process of feminization, we can see that the stakes are not only to retain the traditional sex/gender

distinction, but to appropriate femininity itself as a male trait. This is not possible for the male-to-female transsexual, who has to disclaim all male privilege--including his own history--once surgery has been agreed upon.

Robert Briffault claims that the notion of the feminine is an economically evolved term permitting qualities other than those attached to the bearers of power in a culture to be valued. In this way, he argues, those whose economic power had been usurped, for whatever reason, are kept from revolting against the dominant group.<sup>26</sup> One might argue, in light of this, that writers like Baudrillard and Derrida are attempting to recover an 'other' economy which, whilst having been initially born out of the strategies of an unacceptable dominant ideology to protect itself, has developed a discourse and power of its own, a power, moreover capable of disrupting the now clearly bankrupt dominant discourse when fed back into it. In the same vein, it might also be argued, however, that these male theorists, in attempting a recouperation of the feminine as creation of a masculinist discourse, and in doing so from a position of male privilege (from a seat of intellectual authority), are merely re-instantiating the power of the dominant discourse in its right and in its ability to access and claim otherness as its own. This is to suggest that such male theory considers

itself the real force behind the discovery of the hidden power of the feminine; that the powers of seduction encysted in the concept of Woman are there for His experimentation and His transformation; that He is the rightful heir to the task of becoming-woman by means of gaining full knowledge of Himself, uncovering His own femininity.

What is bad for feminism is male privilege, and it is probably true to say that occasionally a male-to-female transsexual will carry more than a small degree of that over into their newly-gendered life, but what this demonstrates is the necessity for transsexuals to be allowed the space within a society of enforced mono-gendered life stories to be able to tell of a multi-gendered past and future. The problematic of male-feminization as a political manoeuvre for gaining or regaining power (over women) ceases to have any significance once it is made clear that what is at stake in transsexualism, as a practice of post- or trans-gendering, is not simply a jump from one side of a binary oppositional gender system to another, and the denial or repression of that jump and what went before it, once undertaken. On the contrary, it is in the transsexual body (as body, as surface of desire and as text) that we may find the potential to map the refigured body and current of gender discourse so as to disrupt that binary; to take advantage of the dissonances created by the juxtaposition of the multiplicity of body-

gender potentials, to fragment and reconstitute gender in new and novel geometries.

It is, of course, true that insofar as transsexual dialogue within gender "identity" and "dysphoria" clinics is concerned, transsexuals, at least pre-operative ones, are as guilty as anyone of confusing the performative character of gender with the physical fact of sexuality, referring to their perceptions of their situation as being in the "wrong body". By adopting such terminology (which is still a prerequisite if one is to be judged suitable for surgery), transsexuals seemingly become complicit with the patriarchal exclusive definition of gender, and help to reinforce the oppositional mode of gender identification. Judith Shapiro points out:

"To those...who might be inclined to diagnose the transsexual's focus on the genitals as obsessive or fetishistic, the response is that they are, in fact, simply conforming to *their culture's* criteria for gender assignment." [Body Guards p.261]

Not only is the language of being in the "wrong body" the only quasi-acceptable alternative in our society to according with ones prescribed gender/sex assignment, but the focus of this artificially oppositional belief is directed specifically at the genitalia, viewed as the focus of sexual

desire. It is thus from within the heterosexual economy of (repressed) desire that institutionalized transsexuality is defined.

At the moment of neocolporrhap, the institutionally constructed transsexual is instantaneously transformed from unambiguous (albeit unhappy) man, to unambiguous woman. The bizarre, manufactured, literature of early transsexualism, concocted by the medical profession and academia, sets the tone for such mystical transformations:

"I'm not a *muchacho* ... I'm a *muchacha* now ... a girl [sic]." [Conn Canary. The Story of a Transsexual p.271]

"In the instant that I awoke from the anaesthetic, I realized that I had finally become a woman."

[Hedy Jo Star. in Gender Outlaw p.46]

And unbelievably, from the second-hand text of Lili Elbe [Andreas Sparre], who, immediately upon waking from surgery writes a note:

"He gazed at the card [he had just written] and failed to recognize the writing. It was a woman's script."

[Which the nurse then carries in to the doctor]

"What do you think of this , Doctor. No man could have written it?"

[The doctor concurs, and remarks that the same

thing has happened to Elbe's voice.]

"the strange thing was that your voice had completely changed...You have a splendid soprano voice! Simply astounding!" [Lili Elbe p.198]

For decades after the opening of the first "gender dysphoria" clinics, the seminal text for the assessment of an individuals "genuine" transsexualism was Harry Benjamin's The transsexual Phenomenon. This, largely fictional and badly researched little manual, was used by the medical profession and academics as standard reference for assessing an individuals suitability for surgery and was accordingly passed around the enclaves of pre-operative transsexuals as a guide to what to say and how to behave in order to be accredited "gender reassignment" status within the medical and psychiatric institution. This situation has changed relatively little, being in the "wrong body" is still the central point of reference in the citing of the diagnostic category of transsexualism, except that, since 1980, it has been considered necessary, by the body police (the medical establishment) that, in moving into the "right body" one must adopt a clinically "good" history to go with it.

Not only must the intervening space in the continuum of sexuality be invisible - nobody ever mentions the ritual wringing of the turkeys neck prior to the mystical

transformation<sup>27</sup> - but the previous state of lived experience must be silenced forever at the moment of transformation. Sandy Stone argues against this institutionalized requirement:

"Passing means to live successfully in the gender of choice, to be accepted as a "natural" member of that gender. Passing means the denial of mixture. One and the same with passing is the effacement of the prior gender role, or the constitution of a prior history. Considering that most transsexuals choose reassignment in their third or fourth decade, this means erasing a considerable portion of their personal experience. It is my contention that this process, in which both the transsexual and the medical/psychological establishment are complicit, forecloses the possibility of a life grounded in the *intertextual* possibilities of the transsexual body."

[Body Guards. p.297]

The art of "passing" requires that the transsexual co-operate and participate in the creation of totalised, monistic identities, forgoing physical and subjective intertextuality and foreclosing the possibility of open relationships. Under the principle of passing, the destabilizing power of being "read" is denied and life experience is grounded upon a anti-



productive fiction (a female or male childhood that the individual never had). This story is not unfamiliar to the person of colour whose skin is light enough to pass for white, to those who can afford facial surgery and melamine operations and to the closet lesbian or gay, indeed to anyone who has chosen invisibility as an imperfect solution to individual dissonance and irony in the face of social prescriptivism.

The post-human transsexual is celebrated in many subcultures as some sort of shaman, and their knowledge of the denied "other side" is held to be invaluable for inventing tactics of patriarchal subversion; for they know the enemy (male privilege and the ego that goes with it).<sup>28</sup> But like all shaman, they are forced to communicate/perform the truth of the other side in such a way that the culture can hear it, that is, they are forced to advertise themselves as symbols standing outside and in opposition to the norms and values of ordinary (mainstream) society. Such a demand then entails that the individuals concerned give up any ability to blend within their cultural, social, family background. This glorification of the transsexuals' status stands in direct opposition to the place they are allotted by the medical community that judges them. Kate notes:

"we're taught that we are literally sick, that we have an illness that can be diagnosed any maybe

cured. As a result of the medicalization of our condition, transsexuals must see therapists in order to receive the medical seal of approval required to proceed with any gender reassignment surgery. Now, once we get to the doctor, we're told we'll be cured if we become members of one gender or another. We're told not to divulge our transsexual status, except in select cases requiring intimacy. Isn't that amazing? Transsexuals presenting themselves for therapy in this culture are channeled through a system which labels them as having a disease (transsexuality) for which the therapy is to lie, hide, or otherwise remain silent." [Gender Outlaw p.62]

In the same vein, Sandy Stone proclaims in her "post-transsexual manifesto":

"transsexuals must take responsibility for all of their history, to begin to rearticulate their lives not as a series of erasures in the service of a species of feminism conceived from within a traditional frame, but as a political action begun by reappropriating difference and reclaiming the power of the refigured and reinscribed body."

[Body Guards p.298-90]

If the essence of transsexualism is the art of passing, then

perhaps Stone's post-transsexualism is more appropriate for our purposes. As she puts it: "Perhaps it's time to begin laying the groundwork for the next transformation." [ibid p.298]

It is precisely this kind of "freeing-up" of gender identity that is feared by the likes of Janice Raymond, who are unable to separate the task of pursuing a feminist anti-masculinist politics from the acceptance and adoption of patriarchally assigned gender specific subjectivity. This is not to deny the reality of operational gender systems, but rather to assert that one does not have to be a victim or to accept the status of underdog to be able to oppose the aggressor.

The tradition of oppositional gender identity is the bedrock of patriarchy, and inasmuch as it is impossible to break free of this state without understanding it, cross-dressing and passing can be taken as positive activities. Moreover, once an individual has begun moving towards a trans-gendered or post-transsexual position, the adoption of a gender identity (whichever one it be) will never be the same again. It should also be pointed out that, within white male supremacist western society, bodily survival alone sometimes demands the ability to pass and, as Kate points out, living at the edge can get a bit tiring when you're in a minority of one:

"I love the idea of being without an identity, it

gives me a lot of room to play around; but it makes me dizzy, having nowhere to hang my hat. When I get too tired of not having an identity, I take one on: it doesn't really matter what identity I take on, as long as its recognizable."

[Gender Outlaw p.39]

Gender is real, it is the real effect of our cultural practices, but it is not an *a priori* given and it cannot be productive or creative when defined within a binary oppositional structure. Nor is the so-called "genderfuck" of transsexualism (and other trans-gender activities) an activity that makes gender roles ambiguous -- and it most certainly does not lead to asexuality, which, as has been argued, comes from the false equation of sexual orientation and activity with biological gender specification -- what it does, is to make gender a fluid continuum. Gender becomes that through which one is able to move freely (although not without effort and a certain dizziness) and that which one is able to transform by making it (its construction and operation) immanent to the body that is identified by means of it. Gender too can be evolutionary.

Citing Kate again:

"Instead of imagining gender as opposite poles of a two-dimensional line, it would be interesting to

twirl that line in space, and then to spin it through several more dimensions. In this way many more possibilities of gender may be explored."

[Gender Outlaw p.117]

And Sandy sounds the warning that must accompany it:

"Here on the gender borders at the close of the twentieth century, with the faltering of phallocratic hegemony and the bumptious appearance of heteroglossic origin accounts, we find the epistemologies of white male medical practice, the rage of radical feminist theories and the chaos of lived gender experience meeting on the battlefield of the transsexual body: a hotly contested site of cultural inscription, a meaning machine for the production of ideal type." [Body Guards. p.294]

In classical male-supremacist society, culture does not simply create roles for gendered people, it is itself the creator of gender. Gender attribution, like gender assignment, is phallocentric, and one is male unless perceived otherwise. As we should all be aware:

"it would take four female cues to outweigh one male cue: one is assumed male until proven otherwise. That's one reason why many women today get "sirred" whereas very few men get called "ma'am"." [Gender Outlaw p.26]

Not only do we confuse sex and gender but we isolated them whilst making them dependent upon one another, such that the only choices we're given to determine the focus of our sexual desire are firmly circumscribed within the binary gender system, desire is domesticated and forced into specific models of sexual manifestation: The heterosexual model- in which a culturally defined male is in a relationship with a culturally-defined female; The gay male model- two culturally-defined men involved with each other; Lesbian model- Two culturally defined females involved with one another; The bisexual model- culturally defined men and women who could be involved with either culturally defined men or women.

Many leading psychological and medical theorists refuse to accept bisexuality as a real category, claiming that it is merely a guise for homosexuality. This denial can be seen as a defensive manoeuvre against opening up a multiplicity of sexual difference--even if it is based upon a binary structuring of gender--by confining sexual preference to ~~x~~ an either/or ground rule. Even where this denial of sexual plurality is not in operation however, it is still the case that all four models depend upon the gender of the partner, minimizing, if not completely dismissing other dynamic models of a relationship which could be more important than gender and are often more telling with respect to the real nature of an individual's desire. These other models, by virtue of the

threat they pose to the overall binary system are traditionally repressed, criminalised or otherwise stigmatized, for example, butch/fem models, top/bottom (sado-masochist) models, triad models, human/animal models, adult/child models, multiple partner models, differently-abled body models, reproductive models, monogamous models, owner/slave models, to name but a selection.<sup>29</sup>

The point here is that there is more to sex (the act) than gender (the category). Sexual preference could be based upon genital preference (which is not necessarily preference for a particular gender), but it could also be based upon the acts one prefers. Elaborate systems for just this kind of preferential distinction are already existent in many so-called "deviant" cultures. For example, the handkerchief code from the Samoia Collective. This code is used for displaying preference in sexual behavior. Colours mean active if worn on the left side, passive if worn on the right.

<u>"Left side</u>	<u>colour</u>	<u>Right side</u>
Fist fucker	Red	Fist fuckee
Anal sex, top	Dark blue	Same, bottom
Oral sex, top	Light blue	Same, bottom
Light S/M, top	Robin's egg blue	Same, bottom
Foot fetish, top	Mustard	Same, bottom
Anything goes, top	Orange	Same, bottom

Gives golden showers	Yellow	Wants same
Hustler, selling	Green	Hustler, buying
Uniforms/military top	Olive drab	Same, bottom
Chickenhawk	White	Novice
Victorian scenes top	White lace	Same, bottom
Does bondage	Grey	Wants bondage
Shit scenes, top	Brown	Same, bottom
Heavy S/M and whipping top	Black	Same, bottom
Piercer	Purple	Piercee
Likes menstruation	Maroon	Is menstruating
Group sex, top	Lavender	Same, bottom
Breast fondler	Pink	Breast fondlee"

[SAMOIS Coming to Power. Interlude I]

Include within this list spots, stripes and checkers and the possibilities are limited only by the bodies willing to participate in them.

There is a new generation of transsexuals entering the scene, post-transsexuals who assess their journey not as either/or (then/now) but rather as an integration, an on-going transformative process with a past and a future. These new transsexuals are the post-humans perhaps most properly



qualified to invent the new post-modern culture, not as shamans, but as living, desiring multiplicities of self:

"One answer to the question 'Who is transsexual?' might well be 'Anyone who admits it'. A more political answer might be, 'Anyone whose performance of gender calls into question the construct of gender itself.'" [Gender Outlaw p.121]

12. Becoming sadomasochistic as a poly-sexual practice.

"I have someone stretched underneath me. Her hands are tied. I have cut her back, and I suppose I could pretend that I don't intend to put my mouth on the wound I've just made. But this is not an ornamental cut - an orchid, a whip, a snake. It is utilitarian, two short lines that cross each other at right angles. It delays the clotting of blood, which wells up thick as tar, a bead of perfect scarlet. Any second now, it will break and run.....

I'm going to come soon, and I put my face down to her back and bite the skin around the cut so the blood spurts into my mouth.

The sight of blood makes most people sick. It means there's an injury, pain, maybe even the possibility of death. But I can smell a woman who is bleeding across a crowded room. I bleed myself every month. I'm not afraid of it. The sight of someone else's blood, my own blood, makes me shake with excitement. It is life. Shedding it and sharing it is the ultimate violation and intimacy for me.....

I appreciate my own pain, enjoy the adrenaline it

takes to slice my own skin, but my own blood has no taste. So I have to take this need to someone else. But I will just smear it on my skin, my face, where I can smell it, but it isn't in my mouth. If I have to drink it, I'll take it out with a syringe and squirt it into brandy to kill the virus.

But this is tonight; this is urgent. It's been too long. This is something I have to have. I drink with the intensity of a newborn child."

[Pat Califia. Melting Point p.221-2]

Sadomasochism [SM] is not a form of sexual assault, it is a consensual activity that involves polarized roles and intense sensations. An SM scene is always preceded by a negotiation in which the top and bottom decide whether or not they will play, what activities are likely to occur, what activities will not occur and about how long the scene will last. The bottom is usually given a *safe word* or *code action* she can use to stop the scene. This safe word allows the bottom to fantasize that the scene is not consensual and to protest verbally or resist physically without halting stimulation. The key to understanding SM lies in the unravelling and acting out of some of the most complex desires within the multiplicity that is the self. The roles, dialogue, fetish

costumes, and sexual activity are part of a drama or ritual of self construction, analysis and destruction. The participants are enhancing their sexual pleasure, not damaging or imprisoning one another. A sadomasochist is well aware that a role adopted during a scene is not appropriate during other interactions and that a fantasy role is not the sum total of her being.

In 1990, in this country, 16 men received prison sentences of up to four and a half years, or were fined, for engaging in consensual SM. These convictions were upheld by both the Court of Appeal and the Law Lords, despite protestations from within and without the juridical system as to the underhand manner in which the convictions were arrived at. In 1995, the European Court overturned the rulings on all counts. During the five years between the arrests of Operation Spanner and the European Court decision, SM and fetish culture have become some of the fastest growing cult practices in the UK, with activities such as tattooing and body piercing becoming almost common place, fetish shops and SM clubs springing up in all the major cities, and kinky conferences disseminating across the Net. The Juridical system has been made an ass of, and continues to make an ass of itself.

As the human body integrates evermore rapidly with evolved and evolving viruses, as prosthetic and genetic technology

enter into a hybrid relation with flesh, and as the human 'self' is transmuted and transformed through virtual technology and the Net, the antiquated mechanism of the juridical, subject-based law is not simply challenged but infected and itself transformed in relation to that which is no longer within its jurisdiction, namely, the post-human body.

Since the 'free-love' days of the 60's, representatives of the molar orders of Church, State and Family have pursued a moral crusade against the growing public face of polymorphous perversity in a permissive society that (supposedly) encourages sexual pluralism. For years their moralizing rhetoric was largely ignored until, in the early 80's, a most unlikely yet mutually empowering alliance was formed between a large number of Christian fundamentalists and a group highly politicized radical feminist separatists.<sup>30</sup> The driving force behind the latter association was a sanctimonious political lesbianism that had experienced a rapid rise in the separatist movement in the States and now claimed to be setting the agenda for the feminist movement as a whole. The puritanism they aspired to was, of course, just what the pious seminary militia were searching for, and the two formed an uneasy and largely unexplored coalition against the "perverted" enemy.

From its earliest proselytizing--directed mainly at the sex industry and its distributors--this puritanical feminism did not go unchallenged. Pitted against the popular WAP (Women Against Pornography) campaign and the 'Coalition of Women for a Feminist Sexuality and Against Sadomasochism' (both of which tended to equate pornography and abortion as violence against women), were lesbian SM groups like SAMOIS who argued against the separatists, that women must be left to choose and define their own sexuality, and who pointed out that anti-porn campaigns were effectively a means to impose sexual correctness upon women as well as men.

In 1982 at the Barnard Conference on Sexuality, the split between these groups came to a head. The WAP claimed that the conference-- which aimed at representing all areas of female sexuality--was itself an obscenity, ignoring the needs of 'real' women in favor of celebrating the perverse inclinations of academics in "debating the niceties of leather and shit". In the media coverage that followed the conference many so-called liberals found themselves siding with the seemingly concrete feminism of the WAP against what was regularly characterized as the perverse rantings of a sexually obsessed theory-bound minority.

In an attempt to circumvent the 'free speech' protection that sexually explicit material enjoys in the US, separatist

ideologist Andrea Dworkin and lawyer Catherine MacKinnon attempted to buy off the Christian moral majority already sympathetic to WAP claims with a 'feminist' solution to 'the pornography problem'. Denying that this amounted to capitulation to the patriarchal state, the separatists promoted a legal Ordinance that stated that pornography *de facto* caused social harm, and sought a city that would adopt it.<sup>31</sup> The Ordinance gave women the right to sue producers of sex magazines and videos for the harm their products caused women as a class. Amongst other things, pornography, it was asserted, was a manifestation of,

"dehumanization, sexual exploitation, forced sex, forced prostitution, physical injury, social and sexual terrorism, and inferiority presented as entertainment"

[Ordinance]

A wholly misinformed and distorted vision of SM sex was made a focal point of the crusade, characterized as

"graphic sexually explicit subordination of women presented as dehumanized sexual objects who enjoy pain or humiliation; or who experience sexual pleasure in being raped, tied up or cut up or mutilated or bruised or physically hurt, presented in postures of sexual submission, servility or display." [ibid]

Had the Ordinance been made law, any woman would have been able to file a civil suit against the sale, exhibition, or distribution of sexually oriented material. This right would not have restricted to models or sexual assault victims; anyone might attempt to secure damages for themselves on the model or victim's behalf, with or without their consent. The model's consent, complicity, or contract was declared unacceptable as proof that they had not been coerced into posing or performing. The immediate effect of an Ordinance in practice would have been to drive all sexual representation and non-mainstream activity underground.

The necessity for feminist proponents of the Ordinance to ally themselves with their previous adversaries - the moral majority - further split the feminist movement, especially when it was made public that McKinnon's employer was the conservative Republican anti-feminist Coughenour who had led a successful campaign to stop the equal rights amendment in Indiana. Thanks in large part to the work of groups like SAMOIS and other locally organized feminist collectives with an investment in keeping the sex in sexual politics, the Ordinances were eventually declared unconstitutional.<sup>32</sup>

The most prominent and popular anti-porn group in the UK at the same time, was the WAVAW (Women Against Violence Against Women), an organization that had been attempting to stipulate



the parameters of politically correct sex in this country for a decade or more. Carried along on the wave of moralizing inspired by the Barnard Conference and the formulation of the Ordinances in the States, WAVAW attempted to censor the imported American feminist magazine *Heresies*' "Sex Issue", which carried an open debate on anti-pornography arguments and an article in support of lesbian role-model play. Censorship, confiscation of material and even physical assaults on Dyke supporters increased in frequency directly following this attempt. It was not however, until the WAVAW attempted to have Dykes banned from the London Gay Centre that the battle came out into the open, forcing British feminists to seriously examine the separatists' dominance of sexual discourse within the movement as a whole.

Again SM sex was the main target of the feminist purists, being mis-described, vilified and portrayed as the backbone of Patriarchy:

"The white woman, the civilized woman, whose transcendent femininity is realized through submission, requires force. Force to exist as such requires violence. Violence inevitably means the infliction of pain. The norm of femininity as it manifests in normal women is masochism. Force actualizes femininity. Violence is sex. Pain is pleasure for the woman. The pornographic conceit

is that the normal female demands the force, the violence, the pain." [Andrea Dworkin. Pornography. p.165]

A violence reinforced in its monstrosity in virtue of its genealogical heritage;

"expressions of male violence current amongst sado-masochists include symbols and activities that are directly fascist and racist. Sado-masochism does not exist in a cultural vacuum; as the name suggests, it comes from a male, violent view of sexuality that goes back centuries. There are clear links between sado-masochism in Berlin in the 1930's and the rise of fascism; the same events are beginning in Britain today."

[Sheila Jeffries Anti-climax Introduction.]

This vision of the powerless humiliated female victim was abhorrent to many feminists, it was however the ideal symbol the Christian CARE trust had been searching for. In a second bizarre alliance, the increasingly isolated separatists and CARE joined forces in the late 80's in the attempt to outlaw newsagents top shelf material.

The alliance did not however prove successful. The growing communications network (most notably satellite television viewing) and increased awareness and availability of sex material in London and across the Channel, thwarted the

zealous crusaders at every turn. And so, in desperation, they introduced into the debate a new gambit, the ruthless exploitation of the issue of child sex assault. There was thus launched an all-out war on kinky and perverted sex with accusations about satanic ritual abuse and soft-core 'violence' spewed into every media outlet that would take it. The fictive causal chain leading from porn to SM to satanism and child abuse was highly saleable. What followed was the redefinition of numerous, previously neutral sexual practices as dangerous, and, for a period, a frightening return to the days when masturbation, being deemed 'self abuse', was enough to put a child in care.

Whilst the Christian zealots filled the tabloids, their feminist counterparts were given ever more copy in the quality press, promoting incredible assertions about international satanic sado-masochistic sex rings which serial murdered aborted babies before the eyes of drugged preschool children, who then had to eat the remains of the sacrifice before participating in sado-masochistic orgies and Kiddy porn movies. The lack of any evidence for this obscenity dreamed up by the pure-in-heart, rather than illuminating its idiocy, gained a further ally in the OPS (Obscene Publications Squad) who, despite the four-fold increase in their operational costs during this period, were seeing convictions down 75 per cent due to jury acquittals.

With the creative storytelling of the pure at heart behind them and given their homophobic history, by 1990, the OPS had largely succeeded in promoting a necessary connection between SM, gay child killers and snuff movies. "Peds under the beds" became the rallying cry of the early 90's moral crusaders who, led by the likes of John Patten, forcibly removed children from their parents and coerced them into "disclosure therapy" to live out social workers satanic sex fantasies, whilst at the same time targeting for harassment homosexuals, home-movie-makers and SM devotees.<sup>33</sup>

Given this context, the uncovering of home-made homosexual group SM movies was bound give the OPS a hard-on. They even went so far as to dig up the back garden of one of the 16 men accused in Operation Spanner, in the hope of finding half-eaten babies. At the home of another, finding a snakes and ladders game, the police asked "So you bring kids here, then, and torture them?" Finally the police had some evidence that perverts did at least exist, and they were not about to have their jubilation deflated by something as mundane as a factual investigation of the activities and persons accused, instead they wasted 500,000 pounds of taxpayers money on a show trial whose duplicity and hypocrisy has hardly been matched to this day.

The judiciary in the case, being equally enmired in the

satanic abuse hysteria, quickly amended the initial charge of "conspiracy to corrupt public morals" with prosecution under sections 20 and 47 of the 1861 Offenses Against the Person Act. The prosecution was far from safe however, as the act permits those who strike a blow against another the right to a defense of consent up to an ill-defined ceiling, and until recently, the act committed had to be likely to cause a breach of the peace. On Council's advice the defendants had pleaded "not guilty" to assault believing, reasonably and correctly had the precedent been followed, that the prosecution would have to prove that there had been a *hostile act or intent* and a *lack of consent*. Judge Rant, being only too aware of this fact, made a ruling that *consent was no defence* against assault, which effectively prevented the defence from presenting their case, which included evidence of the consent of all individuals accused to all acts involved, and further, to the expert testimony that SM had nothing to do with acts of coercive, vindictive or permanent bodily damage.

It became clear to the defense council that Judge Rant was not about to let the accused off with cautions. Nor was he prepared to risk a not-guilty verdict by citing the 1967 Sexual Offenses act which forbids gay men having sex if a third party is present. With no defense to mount, the Council was obliged to recommend the defendants change their pleas to

guilty. On the 19th December 1990 the formal convictions were made and the Judges position was clarified. The role of the judge and jury, Rant informed the court, is to draw a line between what is and what is not acceptable in civilized society, and that sadomasochism is "degrading and vicious" and thus, by definition, on the wrong side of the law. Rant's decision was upheld 18 months later by the Court of Appeal and confirmed by a split 3:2 decision by Law Lords in March 1992.

It is manifestly clear from the remarks of all the judges concerned in the Spanner case, that a definition of SM sex had been formulated in advance of and despite any relevant information on the subject, a definition moreover that was indebted to the original rantings of the anti-porn radical feminist separatists. From this careless disregard for the facts three moves followed: 1. The assertion that the essence of sado-masochistic activity is the infliction and reception of pain. 2. That inflicting such pain amounts to assault in English law. 3. That no 'victim' of an assault can consent to being assaulted. It is this third point that led to the Spanner convictions, a point which is dependent upon the first two for its validity. Yet the first justification is erroneous and the second only became a legal 'fact' by virtue of the Spanner judgements (and could easily have been decided otherwise).

Part of the problem in placing SM activities under the heading of assault is that most contemporary exceptions to the assault law have never been explicitly listed either in Case Law or in Statute, and that mutually gratifying SM sex was neither an exception nor an assault before the Spanner Judgement. By declaring that consensual SM sex was not an exception, the judges were, for the first time in history, making a distinction between the right to use various forms of force in the name of sport and those to create sexual pleasure. By ignoring the precedent of letting the jury decide on borderline assault cases, by refusing to clarify what was meant by "good reason" to classify something as an exception, and by refusing to supply any guidelines as to the definition in borderline cases, the judiciary effectively used their power to place sex acts in a criminal category, without defining the boundaries of that category.<sup>34</sup>

The embarrassment for the law is that in order to justify prohibiting acts by claiming that they are not in the public interest requires a judge to decide that there is "no good reason" for the act. As many of the existing violent exceptions to the assault law relied upon the anachronistic justification that they helped prepare the realms subjects for war, and most contact sports would fail that test, most so-called exceptions have no more 'good reason' than SM. This became obvious when the Law Lords claimed that they did not

have to provide good reasons for their own whims and fancies. Behind the nonsense made of the assault law, however, is the simple fact that the Law Lords knew that if they left the decisions to the defendants' peers on juries, their own power would be reduced, and the Law would not be manipulable for political reasons.<sup>35</sup>

It is in virtue of the relation of the body to the law that SM (like transsexualism) is of vital interest to a cyberfeminist position, for how can we learn to become-cyborg when we are still paranoid about being meat; of what confines us within and motivates our pursuing a separation between our desires and our flesh. Testing the limits of the body is a crucial element of exploring the multiplicity of the self, which seeks to move beyond the constraints of biologically and sociologically programmed desire. SM is one of the most successful decoders of the law of the ethically and socially unified subject-citizen, effectively dismantling both its conditions and its consequences. The basic dynamic of SM is not pain but power-play and the exploration of sexual desire without the familiar constraints of economic control, proscribed role-behavior or forced reproduction.

Our political system cannot digest the concept of power unconnected to privilege. SM recognizes the erotic underpinnings of our social system and seeks to reclaim them.



There is an enormous swelling beneath the priest's robe, the cop's uniform, the president's business suit, the soldier's khakis. But that phallus is powerful only so long as it is concealed, elevated to the level of a symbol, never exposed or used in literal sex. A cop with an erection sticking out can be punished, rejected, blown or enjoyed, but he is no longer a demigod. In an SM context, the uniforms and roles and dialogue become a parody of authority, a challenge to it, a recognition of its secret sexual nature.

Although one can understand how feminist anti-SM comes about from the fact that the women's movement has always fought against the idea of women as fundamentally masochistic, against the belief that they create, or are at least responsible for their own second-class status, and have to accept their positioning as the natural victims of biologically constructed domination, a sexual sadomasochist has no more wish to be raped than anyone else, nor does she wish to be battered, discriminated against at work or kept down by the system. Her desire to act out specific sexual fantasies is very different from the pseudopsychiatric dictum that a women's world is bound by housework, intercourse and childbirth. Furthermore, women and gays who are hostile to other sexual minorities are siding with fascism: They don't want the uniforms to degenerate into drag--they want uniforms of their own.

"S/M is scary. That's at least half of its significance. We select the most frightening, disgusting or unacceptable activities and transmute them into pleasure. We make use of all the forbidden symbols and all the disowned emotions. S/M is deliberate, premeditated, erotic blasphemy. It is a form of sexual extremism and sexual dissent..."

[Califia. Public Sex p.158]

SM practitioners hang out in the gay community because that's where the sexual fringe starts to unravel. They are limited only by their own imagination, cruelty and compassion, and by the greed and stamina of their partners body.

"No matter how poetic I am, some people will never be able to see anything beautiful about the authoritarian set of a women's broad shoulders inside a leather jacket that is well broken in, or the curve of a submissive's back when she dares to kneel and arch her shoulders for the lash. The prospect of a human body being rendered helpless, put under slowly increasing stress, so that the maximum amount of sensation can be run through skin, nerves and muscles, will always seem horrifying to some readers, not a fascinating attempt to bring out the body's stamina and grace.

Do these people hate me? do they want sadomasochists to cease to exist, because of a different notion about what constitutes the good and the beautiful?" [Pat Califia. Macho Sluts. p.25]

Classically, the law justified itself by two movements, regressively through abstraction to the Good as absolutely necessary principle and condition (of society, exchange, association, desire); and progressively through reduction to the relative best outcome, that is, the consequences of action. For law to remain between these two poles, it must subject all beings to its authority and for this it must create subjects and a force external to them which can be turned upon their presumed autonomy, as that which defines them as subjects (as that which keeps them safe from the chaos and turmoil of experiencing their multiple desires).

It is the law that tyrannizes where power is ultimately dependent upon the complicity of masters and slaves. As we recall from section eight, it is in the nature of human beings, in Enlightenment terms, to internalize the law that enslaves one to an unbiddable, unapproachable master, becoming more-than-man in the image of God the lawgiver. It is the notion of consent in the experimental sphere of sexuality that the law and its adherents find so abhorrent,

the notion of setting ones own constantly revisable limits. Here we are witness to the double-bind of the subject in our era; at once seeking protection from the law and yet despising the false repressive subjectivity it is set up to enshrine. Man has found himself incapable of occupying the role of mirrored god (semi-divinity) and thus despairs of himself; even more so as he recognizes the law (the divine sanction) as the displacement of his own desires for unity and mastery.

The would-be-tyrant speaks the language of the law and lives in its shadow. SM is not complicit with this usurpation, it is neither the language of the Nazi concentration camp guard, nor that of the abused victimized female body under patriarchy. SM does not transgress the law but transcends and transforms it by placing it en scene. If anything, SM is more a parody of the hidden sexual nature of fascism than it is a worship of or obsequience to it. Its eroticism focusses on forbidden feelings or actions and searches for a way to obtain pleasure from them. For SM practitioners the most significant reward for being a top or bottom is sexual pleasure. If they don't like being a top or bottom they simply switch keys.

"If you don't believe we choose to do S/M, you aren't using the term 'consent' in any meaningful way, but rather as a synonym for 'mature',

'socially acceptable' and 'politically correct'."

[Califia. Macho Sluts. p.27]

In SM the law is scrupulously applied such that its absurdity is demonstrated and the very disorder it is intended to prevent is provoked. The law is reduced to its furthest consequences, forced to manifest itself in consequences. In an SM scene you won't ever get sent to a shrink, a judge or a parent, unless they're wearing rubber hosiery and carrying a whip. The point of sadomasochism is that the very law which forbids satisfaction of a desire under threat of subsequent punishment is converted into one which demands the punishment first ordering the satisfaction of the desire to follow alongside or upon it. Pain is not the cause of the pleasure received so much as the necessary precondition for achieving it. The sadomasochist bottom knows that the law increases the guilt of the person who submits to it, thus she finds new ways of descending from the law to its consequences (just as the sadomasochist top ascends to its conditions); she stands guilt on its head by making punishment into a condition that makes possible the forbidden pleasure.

The law is just the name of the scene being enacted, its power is concentrated within the safe word, the transformative word that sets up, reverses or collapses the relations en scene. The "safe word" is a bifurcation event,

no such events are possible where coercion is involved. It is the play of necessity where accident is itself an outcome and precondition of that necessity.

### 13. Post-human bodies in becoming.

Becoming is not historical but topological: It is not a matter of progression or regression but viral involution. The law that attempts to master bodies through the prescription of acceptable gender roles and sexual practices is not simply transgressed in bodily practices of transsexuality and sadomasochism (as processes of becoming), but is transformed with the body in play, such that both law and body enter into a new relationship and one that is permanently open to re-negotiation and re-evaluation through the commercium of association. Becoming is not intentional but directional: It is a movement (a line of flight) away from the domain of exclusive disjunction that demands desire be actualized either as this or that (male or female); it is a counteractualization perpetrated by way of an alteration of the perception of constraint (the boundaries of attraction). The body-in-becoming associates with its constraints by becoming (over) sensitive towards them, thus converting them into opportunities, potentialities.

When becoming-same holds sway (as is the case with the becoming-normalized the liberal feminism; becoming oppositional yet equal in terms of power, of lesbian separatism; becoming female-God of the Dalyesque mystic fringe, desire turns against itself and society begins to

attack its parts. In the name of humanist inspired transcendence there can be but two attitudes towards bodies - incorporate or annihilate, and as every body has within it the ability to be duplicitous (to pass as one body-category while continuing to incarnate another) every body is a potential enemy.

Strategies of passing become invaluable in coordinating the initial move away from one or other of the oppositional extremes of molar attraction (male or female). In trans-gendered passing moreover, there is no stable or underlying identity. It is not the male-that-was who is left behind in passing, but the definitional category of male, that is, the bipolar gender system itself, that is made immanent, singular and fluid. The past does not take on the shape of a well-ordered and integrated, unified structural history, a story of the self-conscious subject, but rather becomes a zone of transcendence in which (and through which) one must be able to pass in order to reach escape velocity on the plane of consistency (immanence). Passing is thus the practice of xenogenetic morphology, an inventive, imaginative experiment, with risks. The simulation of gender undertaken in passing, as an introduction to becoming-trans-gendered of the poly-sexual being, is a practice which fails to respect the boundaries between identity sites and the rituals for moving between them as givens. This passing does not involve a



comparison or movement between bodies considered separately as entities unto themselves, but is rather a matter of diagramming differences in potential associated with bodily, machinic and other parts as such. In this sense then, the trans-gendered, poly-sexual, xenogenetic cyberfeminist is non-human (having no human sex or gender), a desiring production that is not one or even two, but  $n$ - sexes.

The becoming-trans-gendered of the poly-sexual being moves the body out of its ricochetting between point attractors of male and female and into the phase space of the strange attractor, inducing turbulent behavior and the creation of incredibly complex boundaries separating basins of attraction. As control parameter (identity-category) shifts occur and energy is dissipated, bifurcation events are made possible. Desiring-production engages any tools available to catalyze, to push systems toward the border of their basin of attraction where small fluctuations can force them into the domain of a different, (more exciting) attractor, setting up an array of potential futures for the possibility of experimentation.

To enter into becoming, to take up the practice of immanentization, is to become post-human, where post-human means nothing more than to have ventured in becoming beyond the qualifying categories that define the states of being

human, that is, morally culpable personhood, sexual and gendered citizenship, educated mainstream (or genius) rationality, etc. Movement through the binary oppositions of man/woman, child/adult, goody/baddy, that lead one out of the human condition can begin in a number of ways, transsexuality and sadomasochism are just two potential bodily strategies thereof. For those who insist on retaining the name of "man" it remains unclear as to whether their attempts to undermine, transgress or reverse the process of schematization (that binds them to a Man-form beyond the empirical and transcendental realm) can hope for anything beyond, on the one hand, creating an elaborate burial ceremony for the dead father (Baudrillard), with or without the accompanying mourning over his loss (Nancy) or hollering in the woods for his blessing (Iron John style); and on the other, (a la Schopenhauer-Sade-Bataille-Genet), becoming the (Kantian) bastard genius son, unable to subvert the immaculating process beyond the repetitive onanistic practice of reproducing hymens, or (which amounts to the same thing) naming themselves last of the line (Nietzsche and Lyotard).

These practices, moreover, run the risk of either maintaining or re-vitalizing the psychically integrated rational subject whose fictitious existence continues to reinscribe an ideal and patriarchally designed body upon which all exchange, we are told, is to be conducted. Such nostalgia is not a feature

of becoming that takes woman as its introduction, for here, insofar as the subject exists at all, it does so in the ironic local space between contradictory signs. Here, the enabling transformative movement of becoming occurs when contradictory associations rather than being resolved one way or the other within the enforced binary social code, are held together in conjunction, transforming the evaluative term (previously held in stasis by the either/or structure), opening it up to re-evaluation on the basis of other associations and linkages, previously unthinkable.

Many self-dubbed post-modern writers, claim that the previously necessary fiction of the subject has, in our era, come to an end, that it has lost its expediency, and can now be seen fractured, shattered and spattered across the new political, economic and culturally global landscape. What has been lost in the breaking asunder of this great I, they tell us, is the governing principle that held it together as unitary entity, a principle we have already seen expressed as *sensus communis*, and which elsewhere hides behind the masks of "justice" "fraternity" and "care ethics". The values of the defunct system of subjectivity--discourse on the truth of being, humanist dialectics and moral reasoning--estranged from their central control mechanism, are none-the-less kept alive by many such thinkers in the concept of the community made small (and the subculture made high culture and made

safe). This is not post-humanism but a poor attempt to re-harness spirit in the face of the threatening instability promised in the machinations of post-human desire. So long as the multiple associations occurring at a local, national or global level are re-glued with the sticky moralizing of humanist enlightenment promise, unregulated commercium will remain merely transgressive. The attempt to codify association with the values of a defunct humanity is no more than a redescribed and renewed venture on the golden pathway towards the goal of psychic unity and equilibrium, Kantian harmonization, the stultifying cud-chewing existence of being.

Marika Finlay De Monchy, illustrates this attempt to recapture a subject control centre:

"if the psyche-soma is permanently rent asunder there is annihilation of the subject or self once and for all. The correct sadist turns back before annihilating the partner in the game, and this moment of turning back is the moment of 'jouissance'. It is the held paradox of de-subjectification and re-subjectification, of the not-me and me of my body." [Body & Society p.28]

"On the verge of death, the sadist turns back and the libido rushes in to replace death by the orgasm: the elation of self-affirmation." [ibid.

This description of a process of near-loss and regaining of the self is rooted in a call to survival of the "sane" organism, in the belief that the body must, at times, be subjectified if the subject is to survive psychically. "I would rather speak of a dialectic between subjectification and de-subjectification which allows for psychic survival." [ibid. p.37] On such an account the practice of sadomasochism is akin to pinching one's skin to be awakened to the consciousness of having a bodily boundary. Following the same logic as the old favorite "Have you stopped beating your children yet?", De Monchy ends up asking: "Does self-mutilation heighten or diminish de-personalization, i.e. does it promote the dispersion of the subject or is it in some manner a hedge against it?" [ibid]

There is a second move often made to avoid the negative aspect of seeming to posit the existence of a psychically integrated, intentional and interested subject by those none the less needing to maintain a logic of *communio*, whereby the subject is replaced with the subject or author as mere function of textuality or linguistics in general. In this way, by replacing a seemingly animate with a seemingly inanimate subject, meaning is produced and yet the structure of the discursive practice itself is left intact. Such a

position replaces the de-anthropomorphization of the subject of post-humanity with an ambiguous anthropomorphization of the instances of language, text and discourse. This "crisis of the subject" as we can see, is a million miles away from the practices of the self elaborated by post-transsexual practitioners of "gender-bending", like Kate, who, as we recall, speaks of a return (at moments of exhaustion) not to a stable pre-existing subject-position, but into a proscribed subject category (identity) in which one may be able to "pass" for a while.

The post-modern subject, as a subject freed from the umbilical cord of Enlightenment thinking, is characterized by many philosophers as psychotically disintegrated through having been split, fractured or dispersed, an action causing a reversal of the Kantian schematism and undermining of the ontological status of the subject as integrated psyche-soma. According to this interpretation the post-modern condition is profoundly pathological. Against this view, it is more fruitful to consider the organism (for want of a better word), as in a constant state of becoming, in a position of being marked and marking a rite of passage between one state (one subject/object/subject relation) and another. The subject occurs as phenomenal effect when this association, this commercium of becoming, fails and a full object seems to have been produced, that is, when communion and confirmation

are achieved; where the ritual is completed; where subject and object are identified and differentiated from one another; where desire is commuted and committed to community (communal recognition of a permanent change in status). It is from within such nefarious existence of the psychically integrated being that the auto-mutilation of sadomasochism is cast, by analysts like De Monchy, as strategy and relief, functioning either by transference or being replaced by abjection - both of which are byways and means for the continued production or maintenance of a fictional unified subjectivity. Moves of this type, may at first glance seem appealing due to their apparent engagement with the real process of de-subjectivization as the experience of a near, or a little- death. It is the very process by which this is effected however, that should clue us into the reason for its inadequacy in falling back into humanist enlightenment rhetoric. De Monchy, like Rheingold, the Krockers and Baudrillard relies upon a primary categorization and separation of organism and environment, followed by their immediate synthesis through de- and re-subjectification to establish the radicality of their positions in regard to more mainstream ethicists.

The obsession with death functions as a stepping stone for the next generation, the reproduced, as a mark of progress. The unitary, unified, harmonious body is the dead body,

static and stable, that can only produce new life through the process of its own corruption. It is the fixation with life that is being unravelled now, with the new technologies of longevity<sup>36</sup> and cyborgesque existence which force us to reassess the ethics of mortality's golden rule - the sanctity of (human) life - which is defunct in an age where life is no longer synonymous with either sentience or mortal (let alone moral) being.



## Notes

1. This is a body which is post-human yet retains a political orientation in respect of the power relations within which it exists.
2. It is easy to understand why, in this context, it is often the figure of the male-to-female transsexual who, in our culture, stands as exemplary physical model of the postmodern body.
3. The physical evidence upon which this division is made is the least clearcut of those listed and many neuro-biologists reject the assertion as wholly fictional.
4. This function of "Woman" will be explored in greater length in the next section.
5. We can see this move at work as far back as in the text of Plato's Symposium, where the love that separates and joins the sexes is articulated, at its highest level, through the voice of the Goddess who is male.
6. This argument is clearly more relevant to English speaking cultures than those whose language permits of no straightforward sex/gender separation, although I would argue that feminist writing in Europe in general (and especially in France) indicates a similar antagonistic interdependence of the two themes.
7. Yet, it makes no sense to define gender as the cultural interpretation of sex, if sex itself is a gendered category (no matter how difficult to divine). Gender ought not to be conceived merely as cultural inscription of meaning on a pre-given sex (as medico-juridical conception); gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established. As a result, gender is not to culture as sex is to nature. Furthermore, if gender is held to be the culturally constructed interpretation of sex, we

must ask if it could not be constructed differently or if there is some notion of social determinism involved, foreclosing the possibility of transformation; whether constructivism suggests that certain laws generate gender differences along universal axes of sexual difference; of how and where the construction of gender takes place, etc. It is also worth noting in this context that one cannot automatically assumed that an essentialist position is also thereby a materialist position, as the anti-essentialist materialist writing of Monique Wittig shows.

8. Such a move does not however entail the abandonment of a feminist politics, for as Judith Butler points out, in respect of the problematic relation of Queer studies to gender theory:

"Only by a reduction of feminism to "gender", then implicitly conflating gender with sex, i.e. "female or male", and then explicitly declaring "sex" to be one of its two proper objects, can lesbian and gay studies establish itself as the proper successor to feminism. This place is however established in part through assimilating sexual difference to sex in such a way that sexual difference itself is refused through the trajectory of sublation. Sexual difference, irreducible to "gender" or to the putative biological disjunction of "female or male", is rhetorically refused through the substitution by which a unitary "sex" is installed as the proper object of inquiry." [Differences. p.3-4]

9. The higher unity, the unity beyond and grounding the reproductive determination of man's linear history, is not the grinding analyticity of time-production and determination, but the conditions of that production in the

existence of two series in schematization. It is only on the presupposition of this higher inclusive level of synthesis that the initial marking of sex-gender as assignment to one or other side of the line can occur.

But let us be clear that insofar as woman is named in this process it is as transcendental production of sex (that is, as transcendent), it is man's determinations of the transcendental in empirical employment that consolidate gender and push through the act of signification.

10. As if woman, as transcendent or matter (permanent substance) were able to get us to the abstract figure of the One whole subject. (This process, from invention to abstraction, is called history.) But woman does not embody the abstract. The consequent failures - watching the string and glue unity of the One collapse back into the multiplicity (2+), or into death (zero), just makes them still more defiant and determined - everything or nothing, god or castration.

11. There is no female equivalent to male molarity. Feminist humanist discourses that proclaim the liberation of woman are not ultimately separable from the politics of identity and substantive unity.

12. The diagram of inheritance and manifestation of the law can be mapped directly onto Kant's description of the manifestation of the laws of nature from God through the works of the genius. The startling similarity of these two patterns is, moreover no coincidence. Unfortunately there is insufficient space in this writing to follow through this relation.

13. The word 'hymen' has its origin in the Greek *Hymenaios*, a hymn sung at marriage ceremonies. Accounts as to the origin of the *Hymenaios* itself are varied: (1) Hymn expressing regret and longing for Hymenaeus, son of Terpsichore, who was

said to have disappeared on his wedding day. (2) Hymn honoring Hymenaeus of Athens, said to have chased some thieves and rescued the Attic maidens they had abducted. (3) Hymn exclaiming and heralding a happy life, joining together the people in prayers for the newly weds that they may find companionship and affection in their marriage [Photius]. (4) Hymn of mourning to Hymenaeus who died before consummating his marriage. [Pindar]. (4a) From (4), Hymenaeus was believed to abide in the hymen (*membrane virginalis*) and to be the victim of the wedding night. Although it is already the case that in Pindar, wedding and funeral meet in the singing of the *hymenaios* (in the legally sanctioned communal rites of passage out of one family and into another), the association of the hymen with a virginal membrane (as in 4a)--and the consequent mourning/celebration of a torn veil--is not of Ancient Greek origin.

14. "Our digestion is performed by a Menstruum which is chiefly saliva." [Cheselden. Anat. III.iv p.165. 1726. In OED.]

15. *Stoma*, for the Greeks, was both the mouth through which air and food passes and the mouth of the uterus (not the vulva *aidoion* or vagina). The female *stoma* has always been the subject of heavy and explicit legislation (even as early as Plato. Laws. VI.). It is an old belief that if a woman shares a table with a man, it can be automatically assumed that she also shares his bed, eating practices, even in Greek times, were cited as evidence of sexual behavior. Although the connection is also made in the male, the symmetry of mouth-genitals is not at all matched:

"That is why Anacharsis, who had dined with Solon and was resting after dinner, was seen with his left hand on his virility [*meros*] and his right

hand on his mouth: he believed that the tongue required a more powerful restraint, and he was right, for it would not be easy to count as many men lost through incontinence in amorous pleasures as cities and empires ruined through revelation of a secret." [Plutarch. On Garrulosity. 7. Mor. 505A.]

16. "Upon the mixture of these two liquors there also obtrudes itself upon the Sense a very strong and offensive smell..which perhaps occasioned some Chymists to call a **Menstruum** (wherein that nitrous spirit and smell is predominant) the Stygian water."

[Boyle. Cert. Physiol. Ess. iv. p140 1669.]

Menstruum: (me'nstruum). Pl. **menstrua** (me'nstrua).

Also 7 erron. **menstrum**. [L., neut. of *menstruus* adj., monthly f., *mens-*, *mensis* month. Cf. F. *menstrue* sing., **menstruum**, solvent, *menstrues* pl., monthly courses. (also OF. *menstre*), Pr. *menstruas* pl., Sp., It. *menstruo*.

In classical Latin the sb occurs only in the pl. *menstrua* (=sense 1). The development (in med. Latin) of sense 2 is to be explained by the fact that in alchemy the base metal undergoing transmutation into gold was compared to the seed within the womb, undergoing development by the agency of the menstrual blood.

17. **Stygian water**, liquor [tr. mod.L. *aqua Stygia*]: in Old Chemistry, a name for **nitrohydrochloric acid** and other **strong mineral acids**. Also applied to virulent **poisons**. *Stygian liquor* (jocularly): a black nauseous drink. *Obs.*

Nitrohydrochloric acid, also known as aqua-regia, NO<sub>2</sub>.

**Nitrogen**: N. Gaseous element forming nearly four-fifths of common air, a necessary constituent of every organized body.

**nitrogen narcosis** intoxicating and anaesthetic effect of too much nitrogen in the brain,

experienced by divers at considerable depths--also called rapture of the deep, depth and (slang) the narks.

[Gr. *nitron*, sodium carbonate (but taken as if meaning nitre), and the root of *gennaein*, to generate.]

Delirious (narcotic) baptism, and the (re)productive act of generation.

Nitrohydrochloric: a. Chem. [NITRO-a.] *N. acid*, a mixture of nitric and hydrochloric acids, forming a powerful solvent, also called *nitromuriatic acid* and *aqua regia*.

Nitrous oxide: a colourless gas (nitrogen protoxide,  $N_2O$ ) with a faint odour and sweetish taste, which when inhaled produces exhilaration (hence called *laughing gas*) or anaesthesia.

Hydro- Combining form of water, employed in many compounds formed or adopted from Greek.

a. Misc' having the sense of water.

b. In medical and pathological terminology, *hydro-* is extensively used to form the names of diseases, being prefixed (i) to names of parts of the body to denote that such part is dropsical or affected with an accumulation of serous fluid, (ii) to names of diseases or diseased formations, meaning as the former.

Serous: pertaining to serum.

Serum: a watery liquid, especially that which separates from coagulating blood: blood serum containing antibodies, taken from an animal that has been inoculated with bacteria or their toxins, used to immunise persons or animals: Watery part of a plant fluid.

(Hydrocele: A tumor with a collection of serous fluid; spec. a tumour of this kind in the cavity of the *tunica vaginalis* of the testis.)

Hydrochloric: Chemical combination of hydrogen and chlorine. Also called hydrogen chloride, a colourless gas with strongly acid taste and pungent irritating odour extremely soluble in

water. (Earlier names; muriatic acid, spirit of salt, chlorhydric acid).

Mineral acids.

Mineral: 1. Any substance obtained by mining; a product of the bowels of the earth. In early and modern technical use the ore (of a metal). Can be divined by use of a mineral rod.

4. A material substance that is neither animal nor vegetable; a substance belonging to the 'mineral kingdom'.

b. In *Alchemy*, one of the three varieties of the philosophers stone (the others being *lapis animalis* and *lapis vegetabilis*).

18. 2-bodies: Douglas; physical and social.

Foucault; physical and political.

3-bodies: Scheper-Hughes; phenomenal (individual), socio-cultural, political.

Christian; physical, spiritual, mystical.

4-bodies: Turner; body-over-time, body-over-space, body of physical desire, body as represented.

Frank; disciplined body, mirroring body, dominating body, communicative body.

5-bodies: O'Neill; world, social, political, consumer, medical.

19. A Code is not the same as a language. Its substance of expression is of the same nature as its contents, unlike language whose form of expression is alienable from its substance and which can alienate the forms of its contents from their substances and translate them into its own substance (meaning), and/or retranslate them into other substances.

"Codes are always power mechanisms associated with molar organization. They are never neutral or

objective. Any science of codes is a science of domination, however subtly masked." [Massumi p.188]

20. This attempt to reintroduce the in-common of a lost social body, is also the revitalization of a public/private distinction (though this time as a more specifically spacial difference.) Rheingold says that we now have "access to a tool that could bring conviviality and understanding into our lives and might help revitalize the public sphere." [Virtual Communities. p.14]

21. The body is now, less than ever a given. it can be molded, shaped, scooped out and filled in with all manner of extras. The temple of the holy spirit has become an amusement arcade of the future. Cardiac pace-makers, valves, titanium hips, polymer blood vessels, electronic eye and ear implants, collagen fibre and rubber skins, polyurethane hearts. Man is no longer simply plugged into a factory, but is plugged in and wired up to the incubator, scanning machine, heart monitor, ultra-sound, dialysis machine, iron lung, respirator and life-support machine.

The body itself is the stuff of commercium with its interchangeable parts, hearts, livers, pancreas, kidneys, corneas, bone marrow, even foetuses, are transplanted alone or in combination. Xenografts - transplants between different species - are routine. Babies are bred as biological re-supply vehicles for bodies in need of repair. The body is engineered in advance of its birth through gene therapy. Babies can be chosen by using sperm banks and ovum catalogues, and utilizing the reproductive technologies of invitro fertilization, artificial insemination, surrogate motherhood, embryo freezing, research into artificial wombs, and embryo implantation. (Children may now have 5 parents: a



sperm donor, an ovum donor, a surrogate mother (rented womb), and two social parents, quite apart from additional parents acquired by fostering, adoptions and re-marriages.) And cloning is well on its way to becoming a reality.

22. Every molar organization produces an image of transcendent agency which procures moral containment. These images form an identity grid through the formulation of codes (empty, inert categories) that are made immanent within the social field of their application. These codes, as actualized by disciplinary institutions, are successful to the extent that they are alienated in their content, operating on levels of reality other than their own. Thus it is the disciplinary institutions that do the dirty work of transcendence.

23. Becoming-transsexual (as an introduction to becoming-hyper-sexual) begins with the differentiation of the molecular body from two (exclusive) molar categories, in escape mode the body slides into a cascade of differentiations, a volatile patterning of bodies moving in all directions in maneuvers of capture and escape that only increase the chances of collision and mutation. What occurs is a hyperdifferentiation that exponentially multiplies the potential bodily states and identity territories that can be traversed and enveloped, for even the singular body is a collective in its conditions of emergence as well as in its future tendency.

24. Theorists of androgyny tend to base their claims upon definitions of the nature and operation of a masculine/feminine difference (it is not usually based upon notions either of a-sexuality or hermaphrodisism). Masculinity and femininity are characterized in one of the following ways:

- i. Where classifications of masculinity/femininity are used in the normative sense as applied to psychological traits meaning more natural or desirable in one sex rather than the

other.

ii. Where masculine/feminine is used in a descriptive sense meaning characteristic of and peculiar to one or other of the sexes.

iii. Where masculine/feminine means having been traditionally assigned to one or other of the sexes.

The problem is that for i and ii, what's being advocated is that males/females should have traits which are now more desirable in one sex than another (i), or which are now characteristic of and peculiar to one sex (ii). But this is simply to perpetuate the myth that masculine/feminine traits are desirable only in one or another sex or are characteristic and peculiar to one or the other. Such a position is ultimately reducible to an articulation of ethical prescriptivism and commits androgyny to maintaining the sex-gender link through masculinization/feminization. This goes for both mono and poly-androgyny. Monoandrogyny, where everyone has both the (morally acceptable) masculine and feminine traits. Polyandrogyny, where everyone has a choice between: (a) Some combination of (morally acceptable) masculine and feminine traits. (b) Only (morally acceptable) feminine traits. (c) Only (morally acceptable) masculine traits. Furthermore, this same distinction works for behavioral androgyny, simply by just replacing "traits" with "roles".

25. Nor should the process of becoming be delimited in terms of the nature of the connection between one state and the next, for a correspondence of relations does not add up to a becoming.

26. Briffault asserts that: "The 'feminine' attributed in women develops only when males acquire superior economic power... No longer having economic importance, women must cultivate other qualities if they are to survive in society." [Mothers p.16]

27. "Wringing the turkeys neck" is the name given to the ritual of penile masturbation just before surgery; a most secret of secret rites. To acknowledge so "natural" a desire would be to risk "crash landing", that is, to be seen to exhibiting "role inappropriateness" leading to disqualification from surgery (and (pre-)transsexual status).

28. A male-to-female transsexual friend once remarked "People who have and exert male privilege just don't want to give it up, after all, its the glue that holds the system together, its assuming one has the right to occupy any space or person by whatever means, with or without permission. It's a sense of entitlement that's unique to those who have been raised male in most cultures - it's notably absent in most girls and women."

29. For example, the lesbian butch and femme model should not be thought of simply as an assimilation of lesbianism back into the terms of heterosexuality. What is at work is rather the concept of "cultural intelligibility" [Judith Butler], which suggests that the contextualised and resignified "masculinity" of the butch, seen against a culturally intelligible "female" body, invokes a dissonance that both creates a sexual tension and constitutes the object of desire.

30. This group was made up of two main contingents: on the one hand, feminists who saw the so-called sexual revolution (especially freely available contraception and abortion) as forcing women to distinguish their sexuality from its reproductive capacity, which, they believed, was necessarily to virilize them, by focussing sex around the male libido; on the other, women who located themselves (for a variety of reasons) as victims of a patriarchal system based on male violence.

31. MacKinnon bases her feminism on a heterosexual model of female victimization, offering an analysis of sexual relations as structured by relations of coerced sexual subordination, arguing that acts of sexual domination constitute the social meaning of being a "man", as the condition of coerced subordination constitutes the social meaning of being a "woman". MacKinnon's view is extreme, yet typical of those feminisms who make free use of the copula in which causal relations are elliptically asserted through the postulation of equivalences, i.e. within the structures of male dominance, conceived exclusively as heterosexual, sex is gender is sexual positionality.

32. The lower court judge Frank Easterbrook even went so far as to denounce the proposed version of the Ordinance for Indianapolis as "thought control". He added that the document

"establishes an 'approved' view of women, of how they may react to sexual encounters, of how the sexes may relate to each other. Those who espouse the approved view may use sexual images, those who do not may not."

[Quoted in Bill Thompson's Assault on Reason p.90]

33. Media coverage of old child murder cases (especially Operations Orchid and Stranger) were re-cycled through the press seemingly daily during this period. There was also a proliferation of scare-mongering documentaries, including The Cook Report which took great relish in parading a convicted child molester, John Peter Bullough, before the public revelling in his assertion that Portsmouth was the world centre of 20 Pedophile sex rings and kiddy-porn producers. Similar claims, elaborated in Tim Tate's Child Pornography and Children for the Devil kept the ball rolling, and by the middle of 91, Bullough was claiming that Portsmouth was now the five-factory 'snuff' movie capital of the world.

34. Bill Thompson, a criminologist at Reading, writes:

"As the only real difference between SM and many legal acts is the sexual intent involved, it is difficult to conclude other than that the Spanner Judgements amounted to legalizing prejudice against and moral beliefs against various forms of sexual pleasure. Once one places the alleged 'violence' that occurs during SM sex in context - you commit a battery simply by bumping into someone in the street, but the law happily allows you to kill another person as long as the 'sport' is regulated - the Spanner decision is dubious. When one adds the manipulation of legal precedent, it should be considered a scandal." ["Assault on Reason" p.92]

35. Apart from the obvious determination of the legal establishment to impose their standards upon the rest of us, there was the little matter of needing to enshrine in law a previous judgement by Lord Lane about actual bodily harm. This case occurred in 1980 and concerned two men who had sought to resolve their differences by agreeing to fight it out. As no one else was present there was no way their actions could amount to a Breach of the Peace. So in order to impose the law where it did not apply, Lord Lane argued that the concept of 'the public interest' should take precedent over a Breach of the Peace when refusing a consent of defence.

There should be added to this the fact that despite their assertions that they were not interested in the fact that the Spanner defendants were homosexual, the Law Lords spent a vast amount of time in their rulings venting their dislike of gay law reform, and expressed pleasure that one participant had now settled into a heterosexual relationship. Likewise, they drew an analogy between SM and homosexuality by

insisting that neither was "conducive to the enhancement or enjoyment of family life, or conducive to the welfare of Society" and that any relaxation of prohibitions would be "giving the activity an imprimatur."

36. "A team from Geron Corporation in Menlo Park, California, and the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory in New York have just announced that they have cloned a component of telomerase, and identified a way of disabling the enzyme. Since it is telomerase that enables cancer cells to go on multiplying *ad infinitum*, this could prove a way of stopping them. Turned around, it could also provide ways of conferring immortality cells and make Rip Van Winkles of us all." [The Times. Monday September 4th, 1995. p.16]

#### 14. The problem with the human being.

If we are to pursue the path of desire in the post-human condition, accepting the redundancy of subjectivity and the ethical program that accompanies humanism, we must consider wherein the stakes of commercium reside, stakes including those appropriate to entities of a primarily human configuration. Here there remain two issues in need of resolution:

1. The facticity and efficacy of the demise of subjectivity as starting point for association (commercium). The undermining of the traditional modernist enlightenment ground of politics, ethics and religion has occurred in two ways: Firstly, as we have seen, there is the recognition that the subject (as a constructed historically specific concept) is itself nothing more than a phenomenal effect of desiring production. Secondly, it has become manifest that human life has no special status at any physical and material level, and in addition, that the special title of *homo sapien* is itself a misnoma. The first of these points has already been dealt with at length in previous sections, as has the second, in respect of the concept "human being" having been shown to be no more than a call to paranoid humanist supremacy (substantiated largely through the workings of traditional

metaphysics). There is however, a further element to this latter point, which concerns the inaccurate categorization of the kind of beings 'we' are as *homo sapiens*.

In order not to offend the church and his own religious sensibilities, the Swedish biologist, Carl Linnaeus, who in the C18th devised our modern system of classifying plants and animals into species, genus, family, order, phylum and kingdom, intentionally misapplied his criteria in order to separate man from the apes. In 1788 Linnaeus wrote to a friend:

"I demand of you, and of the whole world, that you show me a generic character...by which to distinguish between Man and Ape. I myself most assuredly know of none. I wish somebody would indicate one to me. But, if I had called man an ape, or vice versa, I would have fallen under the ban of all ecclesiasts. It may be that as a naturalist I ought to have done so." [from Linnaeus to J.G. Gmelin, Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors p.274]

Although, as we can see from the above, Linnaeus' miscategorization was something he was both aware of and unhappy about, his error has been perpetuated to this day, with *homo sapiens* being seen not only as a separate species, but as a separate genus and even a separate family,



*Hominidae*. In accordance with Linnaeus' fiction, our nearest relative, the chimpanzee, is given not as *Homo* but as *Pan* (there are two species, *Pan troglodytes* and *Pan paniscus*) while the gorilla is a separate genus, *Gorilla gorilla*, with the apes as a whole belonging to the family *Pongidae*. Recent developments in biogenetics over the past two decades have, however proved (on the basis of genetic comparisons), that the degree of genetic separation between man and chimpanzee is minuscule (less than 2%). Indeed, man is closer to the chimpanzee than two species of gibbon that belong to the same genus are to each other. We may be a separate species, but as human beings we belong to the same family and the same genus as chimpanzees and gorillas.<sup>1</sup>

Given this biogenetic evidence it seems clear that we are no longer scientifically justified in asserting the uniqueness of human life and thence the supremacy of the human race over all others. Moreover, with the collapse of religious moral prescriptivism (in the death of God and of the subject), we are no longer able to legitimate ethical and legal practices that are grounded upon the sanctity of human life. The popular aversion to this conclusion (primarily by the church, the medical profession and bioethicists of different persuasions) and the consequences of its acceptance are considered in the next section.

2. Following the discussion of the comparative value of human and other life forms in an ethical and medico-juridical context (in section 15), section 16 will assess the way in which we understand the difference between beings in general



and their environment, especially given the breakdown of traditional oppositions of man and nature, the mixing of artificial life/environment distinctions in virtual reality, and the theories that abound in the currently popular environmental and Gaia philosophies and evolutionary geology and astronomy.

The conclusions drawn from the enquiries of these two sections will be drawn together under section 17 which will explore the possibility and uses of evaluative criteria for establishing life as valuable, in the light of the philosophical development of thought and consciousness.

15. Bioethics and the rights of the "person".

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary to one another: so that ye cannot do the things ye would."

[Galations. 5.16]

Control over the body has, throughout history been the favoured method for the mastery and domestication of desire. Ethics<sup>2</sup>, as an institutional discipline and practice, conceived and manufactured under various teleologies (Aristotelian "Good Life", Paulian "Asceticism", Hegelian "life of the Spirit", etc), themselves having little to do with the body (aside from its castigation), has, for centuries, shaped the law dictating what can and cannot be done with bodies. The concept of the life of the body has been of relatively little interest in itself, "life" in its true or pure sense being given over to that 'other' realm that one accedes to after or alongside the demise or rejection of the desiring body. But this transcendentalism of 'life' is collapsing under the weight of the realities of twentieth century living. With the growth in secular culture

and failing belief in any sort of afterlife, alongside the increase in technological capabilities to assist and replace bodily processes, life has become a terrestrial phenomenon whose boundaries are as yet unspecified.

Life is no longer a principle emanating from a Noumenal sphere of freewill, a mind or spirit-dictated realm above and beyond the reality of the flesh. But nor can life be defined simply as an empirical event mapped upon a linear causal diagram, an event readable as a unique state of affairs with a specific beginning and end. Medical science has enabled us to fix particular points in the material development of an animal organism (conception, quickening, parturition, etc.,) yet we still argue as to when "life" begins. Furthermore, we can say at what moment, for a particular body, the heart stopped beating, the lungs failed, certain upper hemisphere brain processes ceased functioning, but we are not able to agree upon when "death" took place.

Death, as a mark of the end of life, is not something that can be pinpointed as a specific event in or of the human body/being. As a non-legalistic concept, it is a process that the body is engaged in throughout its existence as a particular, bounded, configuration, wherein numerous processes cease, irreversibly, to function. As such it is something that we take for granted and are not usually

required to confront in respect of determining its point of arrival to a particular body. As a juridico-medical definition, a term accredited a body by the medical profession, death is a sum, a conclusion, arrived at as a result of certain tests and (negative) criteria. In this context, the definition of death may change according to what it is being used for. Conflict arises when the concept of death is thought of as a state (of being or non-being), rather than as an arbitrary point in a process of material transformation, chosen in order to license certain types of action. As a definition, death is constantly having to be revised and redefined in order to meet the requirements of its differing uses (e.g. organ removal for transplant, burial of the body, praying for the soul departed, etc.) and the comparative body-value attached to each. These definitions are not however interchangeable, for example, most people would feel very uncomfortable about burying a body that has been defined "dead" for the purposes of organ transplantation given that it's heart may still be beating and pumping blood around its soft, warm, pink flesh. As a definition chosen to fit a specific need, "death" can no longer be held to designate the moment of attaining an absolute state (being dead) as such. "Death" like "Life" when held to transcend the material conditions of the state of a particular organism, does nothing more than accord status to a particular class of beings in respect of abstract laws concerning their worth in

ideal teleological terms.

The traditional Christian assertion, that death marks the moment of the separation of soul (personality or personal identity) from the merely physical body, is no more meaningful in defining a state of the living system, than the assertion that death is some divine moment at which the life-energy of a person gets channelled back into the great think-tank of being, or as when the essential energy of a person takes on a new animal or human configuration. Reverting to the myth and superstition of old, be it of Christian, Buddhist or other transcendent faith systems, fail to appreciate the basic point that the lived body, from a human perspective, is that to which the concept of a person has to be attached in order to make sense of the organisms existence, whatever form that body takes (real, abstract, virtual, etc.), and the fact that we cannot trace, or refuse to think about "life" in the commercium of that matter once its current configuration has transformed, indicates nothing more than a lack of imagination (driven by humanist bias) on our part.

The classical definition of the end of life focuses upon the permanent cessation of the flow of vital bodily fluids. This definition, although used for many decades, is circular in its use of the term "vital": You only know whether a bodily

fluid is a 'vital' one by seeing if the being dies when it permanently stops flowing, but you only know that the being has died by seeing if its vital fluids have stopped flowing, etc. The point, as has been said, is that death understood pragmatically, is a process we take as occurring to a particular entity in its specific material configuration, the moment at which a specified crucially irreversible point is passed. Such a point is not something to be discovered, by medical science or any other discipline, but is chosen (in accordance with the reasons for requiring its be proclaimed).

Nowadays, brain processes rather than the flow of unspecified vital fluids are the focus of life and death decisions. The brain is not separable from the body as such, it is not something other than body, it comprises real processes occurring within a real material organization of cells. Nevertheless, although one might correctly observe that its failure to function (or perhaps even to function adequately) results in a lack of the experiential communicative activity wherein we understand the quality of life to reside, we cannot claim that it thereby exhibits its own death, for the pronouncement of death is not an observation but a decision concerning what to do with it next.

The modern medical definition of death (dating from about 1981), is that of 'brain death', where the upper cerebellum

and brain stem are deemed irreversibly non-operational. The motivation behind reappraising the classical definition of from a medical and economic viewpoint is obvious when we look at the original document produced by the Harvard Brain Death Committee whose report formed the backbone of the consequent legislation in this area:

"Our primary purpose is to define irreversible coma as a new criterion for death. There are two reasons why there is a need for a definition: (1) Improvements in resuscitative and supportive measures have led to increased efforts to save those who are desperately injured. Sometimes these efforts have only a partial success so that the result is an individual whose heart continues to beat but whose brain is irreversibly damaged. The burden is great on patients who suffer permanent loss of intellect, on their families, on the hospitals, and on those in need of hospital beds already occupied by these comatose patients. (2) Obsolete criteria for the definition of death can lead to controversy in obtaining organs for transplantation."

[Journal of the American Medical Association.  
August 1968.]

Although it is the non-functioning of the "whole brain" that



became the legally adopted criteria for the pronouncement of death, most medical professionals concur with the assertion that "death is the irreversible loss of the capacity for consciousness", that is, that non-operation of the upper cerebellum alone is sufficient for it to be announced that the patient is dead. What we have as a result of this, is a situation where, on the one hand, patients deemed to be in a "persistent vegetative state", that is, persons whose upper cerebellum is dead but whose brain stem retains some function, in not being definitively "brain dead", are (in principle) legally protected from being disconnected from a respirator, from having their organs used for transplants, and in the medical staffs terms, from being "allowed to die".<sup>3</sup> Whilst on the other hand, patients are classified "brain dead" on the basis of tests showing *some*, but not *all* lower brain activities to be non-operational (it being too expensive and time consuming to test for all activity).<sup>4</sup> In practice it is largely left up to the medical profession in consultation with the patients family as to whether or not to continue respiratory assistance and/or nutritive feeding to those with intact brain stems but no upper brain activity, for it is to these people that the decision as to what to do with the body next falls.

This is not always the case however, for the legal situation demands that the judiciary intervene where the law is

publically seen to be being flaunted. Pragmatic decisions as to what to do with a particular body next are undermined where the law, with its call to a transcendent concept of life (which in our era cannot be divorced from the body) intervenes. It is this scenario that lead to one of the most momentous ethico-judicial decisions this century, a decision that effectively swept the ground out from under the most fundamental ethical principle of the medical profession, namely, the principle of the sanctity of life, which asserts that all human life is intrinsically valuable and to be preserved at all costs.<sup>5</sup>

"Traditional medical ethics...never asks whether the patient's life is worthwhile, for the notion of a worthless life is an alien to the Hippocratic tradition as it is to English criminal law, both of which subscribe to the principle of the sanctity of human life which holds that, because all lives are intrinsically valuable, it is always wrong intentionally to kill an innocent human being." [John Keown "Courting Euthanasia? Tony Bland and the Law Lords" *Ethics and Medicine*. p.3]

In 1989, Tony Bland, a healthy 17 year-old, was crushed so severely in a football crowd that his lungs could not

function and his brain was deprived of oxygen, destroying his cortex and leaving only the brain stem operational. His state was described as follows:

"[He is in a] persistent vegetive state....fed liquid food by a pump through a tube passing through his nose and down the back of his throat into the stomach. His bladder is emptied through a catheter inserted through his penis, which from time to time has caused infections requiring dressing and antibiotic treatment. His stiffened joints have caused his limbs to be rigidly contracted so that his arms are tightly flexed across his chest and his legs unnaturally contorted. Reflex movements in the throat cause him to vomit and dribble. Of all this, and the presence of the members of his family who take turns to visit him, Anthony Bland has no consciousness at all. The parts of his brain which provided him with consciousness have turned to fluid."

[*Airdale N.H.S. Trust v. Bland* (C. A), p.350]

Despite the pitiful condition of his body, it was possible to keep Tony Bland in the same physical state (at great economic cost) for an indefinite number of years. The health professionals and his family, seeing no benefit for anyone in

prolonging Bland's "life" for decades, wished to disconnect his food supply which would cause him to "die" within a week or two. In normal circumstances such action would not be unusual, but in this case, the accident causing Bland's condition was under official enquiry, requiring Bland's doctor inform the coroner as to his intended action; the coroner, in turn was obliged to warn the doctor that such action could lead to criminal charges. The hospital administrator, however, agreed to back the doctor and family and applied to the Family Division of the High Court for declaration that the hospital might lawfully discontinue all life-sustaining treatment, including ventilation and the provision of food and water by artificial means, and discontinue all medical treatment to Bland "except for the sole purpose of enabling Anthony Bland to end his life and to die peacefully with the greatest dignity and the least distress" [ibid]. Despite the charge made by Bland's appointed official solicitor--that the hospital's request amounted to asking permission to commit murder--the Court found in the hospital's favour. The Court of Appeal upheld the Family Courts decision, as did the House of Lords - the highest court in the British judicial system - where there was made manifest the transformation of the governing ethical principle being applied.

"The consideration as to the quality of life of Mr

Bland now and in the future in his extreme situation are in my opinion rightly to be placed on the other side of the critical equation from the general principle of the sanctity and inviolability of life. In this appeal those factors which include the reality of Mr Bland's existence outweigh the abstract requirement to preserve his life."

[ibid. my emphasis]

One cannot help but wonder if such a remark would have been made by the Law Lord had the situation been different in respect of the burden Bland's continued existence placed upon the financial and staffing resources of an N.H.S. hospital. Yet, whilst it is certainly the case that economic and class-based considerations cannot be excluded, it is nevertheless clear that the motivating force behind the judicial decision was an ethical one.

The result of Bland's case, whilst not leading directly to a reform in the "brain death" criteria, has made it blatantly clear that the acceptable face of determining the value of human life in the twentieth century lies in examination of the operation of the upper cerebellum, that is, in the consciousness of the individual being. Death, in the economy of ethical representation thus finds its focus in the mental

operations of the subject, in an idealized being whose birth occurred as long ago as the 16/17th century.

"But actually we feel this destruction [of the body] only in the evils of illness or of old age; on the other hand, for the *subject* death itself consists merely in the moment when consciousness vanishes, since the activity of the brain ceases. The extension of the stoppage to all the other parts of the organism which follows this is really already an event after death. Therefore, in a subjective respect, death concerns only consciousness." [Schopenhauer. The World as Will and Representation bk 4. section 54]

On the one (ideal) hand, death concerns the end of subjectivity, and on the other (real, pragmatic), it concerns the decision as to what is to happen to the body next.

On the headstone of Nancy Cruzan who had been kept "alive" in a persistent vegetative state for eight years before permission was granted to remove her feeding tube, her family had engraved the following:

NANCY BETH CRUZAN

MOST LOVED

DAUGHTER-SISTER-AUNT

BORN JULY 20, 1957

DEPARTED JAN 11, 1983

Demanding that we refrain from referring to a patient whose upper brain has ceased functioning as "dead" is not, on the whole, so much a disinclination to have the body used for transplant, burned or buried, but the inability of the onlookers to accept that the "person" that was, is no more; that the citizen with his/her concomitant rights is no longer around to demand those rights (or have someone else demand them on their behalf); that the essential spark of individuality, the essence of that singular being, that was produced through the operation of an interactive consciousness in numerous processes has suffered irreversible cessation; that the subjective construction of subjectivity for the individual has died with him/her, and that the constructions attributed to that person by others, whilst being open to reinterpretation and reappraisal, will never more be enriched with material issuing from the body of that individual. The problem with this, of course, is that the idealized form of subjectivity that consciousness is presumed to make possible, is indeed ideal, it is not something possessed but accredited to a being (and often problematically so in the case of certain classes of human beings such as the severely brain damaged and the unborn).

Where consciousness is elevated to the status of a

transcendental condition, subjectivity (and the human telos) becomes the transcendent arbiter of moral worth in and over life. The further away we move from accepting subjectivity as the grounds for our ethical decision making (or as justification for our emotional reactions), the more forceful the demand that we confront our own prejudices and fears, especially the fear (real or pretended) of eugenics. There has, over the last couple of decades, at a collective cultural level been a sea change in attitudes towards ethical values, away from absolute laws - like the sanctity of life - and towards guiding principles, in this case, as to the quality of life. Alongside this change there has also arisen the need to question the assumption made as to the supremacy of human life over all other life forms. The more we discover about the genetic and behavioral makeup of other creatures, the closer we discover that we are to them; the less we posit consciousness as something above and beyond the operation of the brain, the more we are able to take seriously a non-species specific discussion of experience and thought as appropriate criteria for ethical decisions concerning beings in the 21st century.

We are moving both away from a concept of man as semi-divine, (made in the image of god), and towards a being whose evolutionary progress has, on the one hand, not moved him so very far away from some other creatures, and on the other, is



in the process of transforming him into a cyborg, literally, a biological machine. The blurring of the species boundaries (and eventually the parameters of the natural and artificial so far as life is concerned), when put alongside ethical judgements as to the quality of life of an individual, can have some alarming consequences, especially for those bioethicists for whom the illegitimate supremacy of the human condition has not yet hit home.

In Genesis 1: 24-28, we are told,

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

And God blessed them and God said unto them, be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

Although such extreme prescriptions are not taken too seriously in our animal-friendly, environmentally-aware age, the underlying assumption concerning the supremacy of human life, of any human life over that of even the most sophisticated animal from another species, is still largely taken for granted. The church, and other hypocritical institutions, are only too willing to go on the attack against women who abort embryos and fetuses, many so

unformed as to not yet have brain activity of any kind, and against the doctors who allow severely disabled and/or brain damaged infants and accident victims to be helped towards a speedy end (although they are usually more vociferous in their attacks against the former due to the so-called "innocence" of the unborn and infants). Yet these same people, and many who are less bigoted and better informed, rarely even think to protest when the liver is taken out of the body of a healthy baby baboon - causing its death - and transplanted into the body of a middle-aged man dying of heart disease.<sup>6</sup> Arguments as to the innocence of the baby baboon, the comparative life-expectancy of the two creatures, the pain they each will suffer, the suffering of their family and friends, etc; and all the other considerations normally brought into a quality of life debate are left unspoken, for what is at stake is not a comparison of equals at any level or in any real, material respect.

If we are to continue to claim that the decisions we make about which bodies we will use for what purpose; about who will be allowed to survive, in what state and at the expense of what other being, and at what financial cost; we must see the illogicality of our speciesism. If subjectivity, as the condition for ethical being, is no longer a feasible ground for action due to its fundamentally arbitrary bias in favour of the white, male, human, middle-class, educated Westerner,

then we must question what to do with an ethical system based upon it. We claim to accredit value to lives largely in accordance with their having or their having the potential to develop a certain kind of consciousness that enables us to deem the being concerned a person, that is, a rational and self-aware being (although, in effect, belonging to a species that, in general, are of this type, and living in a dependency culture, is shown to be sufficient in the case of many mentally deficient human adults). To be a "person" is to be accredited with a certain moral standing, or, to put it another way, a "person" is a being justified in defending, or having defended on their behalf, certain basic rights in a society of interacting persons. There is no reason to assume that all persons are human, or even that all humans are persons, (indeed, one of the original uses of the word was to allow for the spiritual contemplation of a divine being as one substance and three persons).<sup>7</sup> John Locke, in the seventeenth-century, proposed a definition of the person that remains relatively uncontested to this day:

"A thinking intelligent being that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places." [John Locke Essay on Human Understanding.

bk.II, ch.9, par.29.]

On this criteria, there are many non-humans who should fall into the category of personhood,<sup>8</sup> and some humans who may

well fall out of it. Moreover, as the capabilities of artificial intelligence increase, there will doubtless come a time in the near future when we have to include under the heading of "person" (or whatever other title is chosen to refer to the criteria noted), beings who are either non-biological or whose biological element has been engineered by man. It is not consequences such as these that make the adoption of a criteria for personhood, rather than (human) subjectivity, under the ethic of quality of life, an unsatisfactory, inoperable and regressive move for the post-human community. Personhood still privileges a form of consciousness that is more than the nature (let alone the sum) of the processes it is deemed to account for, and this more involves the notion of a human telos. Ethics, as we have used the term here, is inseparable from morality. It is only when these two are divorced however, that it is possible to postulate guidelines for living that are appropriate and immanent to the systems to which they apply. In this sense, morality can be seen as a system of judgement, of rules for action based on laws always having transcendent value. Ethics, when freed from internalization of moral law, can be taken as a typology of immanent modes of existence.

## 16. The Redundancy of Ethics?

Ultimately, if we follow the line of thinking, referred to by bioethicists (following Peter Singer's lead) as the "community of equals", we must consider what real advance has been made in replacing the values and criteria of subjectivity with those of personhood. On the positive side, it is surely the case that by adopting the criteria of personhood as the basis of ethical decision making, we would be obliged to consider more honestly and empathetically the fate of those human beings at the lower end of the economic, welfare, intellectual and/or disability spectrum, (and those suffering persecution under extreme political regimes). Adoption of the new criteria might also lead to our learning much more about the animals with whom we share the planet, especially those 'higher' animals (the great apes and dolphins), who seem to have complex communications systems that we have not yet fathomed. On the negative side, a so-called "slippery-slope" argument warns against our moving into a position of anthropomorphising all living things and attributing to them the concomitant rights and duties. Whatever criteria are adopted as entrance requirement into the "community of equals", if they let in dysfunctional human beings without reference to the human society of which they are a part (i.e. the protection often afforded dependent

humans by their families and the belief in--if not the practice of--a caring society with an operational welfare program), it will undoubtedly lead to the logical inclusion of all "higher" animals. Criteria such as self-consciousness, communication skills and rational behavior, however, will have to be qualified when applied to the animal kingdom (not changed as such, but considered to manifest themselves in non-human ways, requiring new methods of investigation), in such a manner that it may become necessary to accept animals such as dogs and pigs who, from anthropological observation of their behavior, clearly exhibit some of these characteristics. With the re-qualification of criteria, it is argued that inclusion within the "community of equals" will then be extended down the animal chain and even into the plant kingdom.

Such a claim is clearly dubious, nevertheless, it illustrates the point that adopting a criteria of "personhood" entails promoting a heavily paternalist state, needful for bringing about a dependency culture for all animals in order to accord them rights without the concomitant responsibilities, as is the case with dysfunctional human beings. It would also, arguably, lead to a moral imperative that we all become vegans or even fructeans (leaving carnivorous animals accepted into the "community of equals" in a condemned position); that we cease any and all experimentation on

animals, that we forgo the domestication of pets, etc. The ludicrous conclusions of this position seem unavoidable if the basis of according the status of "personhood" to any creature is merely to afford them the rights and responsibilities which, up until now, have been the exclusive domain of humanity (although not all human beings have been counted as eligible thereto).

Rights and responsibilities (duties) are, of course, the basis of any moral code of behavior, but they are founded upon a fundamentally human, and largely humanist, ethical ideal. This ideal is, moreover, produced out of a very specific history, one which, in the West at least, cannot be separated from its Judeo-Christian origins. To apply the codes of behavior based upon such an ethic to non-human animals, indeed, to force it upon humans who have not previously been accorded it, would seem both pointless and unjustified. Ethical codes were brought into existence to protect the "haves" from the "have nots", they are a symptom of privilege, and as such, deserve to perish with those outmoded beings who claimed them.

What it is important to give consideration to in the postmodern post-humanist world in which we all live, is not any sanctity or quality of life ethic that begins by instituting a hierarchy of value accorded to different forms

of life on the basis of their matching up to an ancient, ideological and defunct morality, but the orientation of entities in the commercium between different and similar forms of life across a broad spectrum. The concern with such an approach, based on the singularity of each instance of commercium (although not excluding considerations of past commercium and the example of those following a similar pattern), is that such unregulated exchange would lead, ultimately to the dominance of the powerful over the powerless; to the exploitation of the manipulative over the naive; of the power-hungry dictators over the weak (a situation totally unfamiliar in today's world!). Such mistakenly pessimistic belief has two sources: Firstly, the misinterpretation of previous historical events where deregulation has seemingly lead to crisis, but where, in fact, crisis only emerges because the deregulated element of society, has to fit in with the remainder which is still operating under a strictly regulated code. Secondly, the fear of a massive growth in eugenic programs arising out of an anarchy of ethics. It is this latter concern that will be explored in the next section.



## 17. Eugenics and the Ideology of science.

The accusation that failing to abide by an ethical code will lead our civilization into a program of eugenics (where eugenics is meant to operate as a dirty word akin to fascism and Naziism<sup>9</sup>), particularly in the field of genetic engineering, is a popular, although misplaced, concern of our era.<sup>10</sup> It is certainly the case that genetic research emerged out of an interest in eugenic principles, as Daniel Kevles remarks:

"Human genetics as a program of research originated with the eugenic idea that the physical, mental and behavioral qualities of the human race could be improved by suitable management and manipulation of its hereditary essence." [Kevles. In the Name of Eugenics Preface.]

It is also the case that, over the past decade, the genes for many diseases have been identified (including those for Huntington's chorea, cystic fibrosis, Duchenne muscular dystrophy and hypercholesterolemia, as well as many blood disorders, immune deficiencies and some cancers). Yet whilst the geneticists may be able to predict the presence of such genes, they offer little promise of a cure to the sufferers thereof.

The growing fear of action being taken against groups or individuals on the basis of information provided by gene therapy, embryo selection and the engineering of sperm, in an ethically unregulated community is indeed grounded. But to assert that such action will be part of a package of human genetic manipulation programs designed for the purposes of removing from society all non-standard beings, (be these groups or individuals) based on an assessment of their quality of life judged from the standard of an idealized norm, is a situation that could only arise in a traditionalist ethically governed program.<sup>11</sup> In a coming society where difference rather than the standard man-form of subject-based philosophy dominates our value system, what will be at stake in making decisions about life and death, genetic and other treatment, will not be idealist principles of the Good Life, the sanctity of human life or any other irrelevant principles, but the value of interaction through difference and evolution. Needless to say, considerations as to the pain and suffering of individuals will play a part in these decisions so long as human beings are empathetic and have nervous systems, as indeed will financial considerations so long as we remain a basically capitalist society.

Discrimination on the basis of genetics is already well underway. Employers have sought to deny jobs to applicants with genetic susceptibility to disease or illness arising

from conditions of the workplace. Life and medical insurance companies in the USA have tried to exclude from coverage people with high risk genetic profiles. And doubtless this trend will continue in other areas, but the point here is that such discrimination is not being carried out in the name of eugenics but of cold hard cash. A far more applicable concern for the anti-eugenicist should be the increasing occurrence of individual families deciding what kinds of children they want to have.

Temar Curlender brought her case, based on the claim of "wrongful life", to the California State Court as long ago as 1980. Both she and her husband had been genetically tested for the genes leading to Tay Sachs disease prior to the conception of their daughter Shauna, and were told that they were in a no-risk category. In 1978 however, Shauna was diagnosed as suffering from Tay Sachs. Their suit sought and was granted punitive damages, compensation for the pain and suffering to be endured during Shauna's expected four-year life span. In explaining its ruling, the court reported

"The reality of the 'wrongful life' concept is that such a plaintiff both exists and suffers, due to the negligence of others. It is neither necessary nor just to retreat into meditation on the mysteries of life...The certainty of genetic impairment is no longer a mystery."

[Los Angeles Times. June 12, 1980. p.3]

And this from a judicial system which only a few years earlier (1978) in the New York State Court of Appeals, had judged on a not dissimilar case<sup>12</sup> based on the claim of "wrongful causation of life", reporting that,

"whether it is better not to have been born at all than to have been born with gross deficiencies is a mystery more properly to be left to the philosophers and the theologians."

[New York Times. Dec. 28, 1978. p.1]

An odd statement when one considers that for centuries the termination before and after birth of unwanted babies has been almost the sole concern of mothers and midwives.

Human improvement, with respect to mental and physical proficiency, is a fact of life issuing, in our era, from the growing demand for high-tech' medicine and its delivery through market economy, that is, from consumer demand and not from eugenicist policies. The principles, policies and practice of eugenics as a means of controlling or exterminating minority groups, on the other hand, can only operate in a society where the privileged few are able to create and act upon a hierarchy of life-evaluation of the kind featured in the religious and secular ethical ideologies of humanism.<sup>13</sup>

Genetic research inspires eugenicist fears not because of what it is doing but simply because of its belonging to a mystical body of science. Like everything else however, science uses commodities and is part of the process of commodity production, it uses money and people earn their living by it. As a consequence it is the dominant social and economic forces in society determine to a large extent what science does and how it does it. For a long time science has been elevated, in the West, to the heights of Ideology. It has explained the world by legitimating its own account of it, seemingly having transcended the human social struggles of economic and political forces, receiving its command from a supra-human objectivity. From such activity there are then derived equally transcendent truths beyond human compromise or error. Moreover, the absolute nature of its truths have been guaranteed by the mystery and veiled operations of its institutions speaking in their esoteric language. It is because of these features that science has been so successful in replacing religion as the dominant ideology of the West. Yet despite its claims to be above society, science, like the Church before it, is supremely a social institution, reflecting and enforcing the dominant values and views of society at each historical epoch.

Prior to Kantian critique, it was not commonly held that individuals should be viewed as the causes of social

arrangements but that they were rather their outcome. People were bound to each other through the community by virtue of obligation. Just as society was viewed as a unified complete body, so the developing science of the 15th and 16th centuries characterized nature as a kind of indissoluble whole. The practice of the alchemists in constantly adding more and more materials to a single experiment in order to transform one substance to another (dead to living and visa versa) is a clear example of this belief.

As society moved into the industrial age and people, as individuals, became able to move from place to place, from role to role, the situation reversed and society came to be seen as the consequence of the activity of individuals. The same process occurred in science, where it came to be believed that the whole could only be understood by its being dissected into its constituent parts. Hence, with the era of Descartes, came the view that the world, both living and dead, was a large and complicated system of gears and levers. Alongside this reductionist view of nature, which broke the world down into independent autonomous domains, came a concentration on mutually exclusive internal or external causation as the basis for explaining its workings.

In respect of our biological inheritance, this has given us a double-aspect picture of the world; On the one hand living

beings are seen as being determined by internal factors, our genes and the DNA molecules that make them up, whilst the world outside us is something that we experience as objects. If our genes are of the successful kind we will survive (i.e. propagate) and if not we will perish. Ideological biological determinists believe that we differ in fundamental abilities because of innate differences, biologically inherited, which form human nature and guarantee the formation of a hierarchical society. It is their advocacy of such an absolutist position that fires the eugenics-paranoia leading to a demand for new and ever more restrictive moral guidelines for the experimentation with and research into genetics, especially where sperm, eggs and embryos are involved.

The fault with biological determinist's absolutism is, of course, the fact that we are not so much determined by our genes as influenced by them. Development depends not only on the material we have inherited from our parents (the genes and other materials in the sperm and egg), but also on the particular temperature, humidity, nutrition, sight, smells, and sounds (educational as well as environmental) that impinge upon the developing organism. Moreover, there is within the evolution of each organism a certain amount of random variation in growth and division of cells during development: developmental noise. Thus it is a fundamental

principle of developmental genetics that every organism is an outcome of a singular interaction between genes and environmental sequences modulated by the random chances of cell growth and division.

It should not be assumed from this that the contrast between the genetic and environmental factors, nature and nurture, is a contrast between the fixed and the changeable. It is a fallacy of biological determinism to assert that if differences are in the genes then no change can occur, as has been shown many times over by biological evidence alone. Equally erroneous is the belief in some basic, unaided, naked or natural ability grounding difference. As Lewontin notes,

"There are some people who can remember long columns of figures and others who are good at adding and multiplying large numbers in their heads. So why do we give written I.Q. tests, which, after all, are simply giving the crutch of pencil and paper to people who do not have the "unaided" ability to do mental arithmetic? Indeed, why do we allow people taking mental tests to wear eyeglasses, if we are interested in culturally unmodified "naked" abilities? The answer is that we have no interest in arbitrarily defined abilities, but are concerned with difficulties in the ability to carry out *socially constructed*



tasks that are relevant to the structure of our actual social lives." [Lewontin. The Doctrine of DNA p.31]

The current popularity of the genome project leads to a tendency to cast genes in the role of actors responsible, as agents, for the causal process of developing organism and eventually societal formations. It is often said in the popular scientific press that genes make proteins and that genes are self-replicating. But genes can make nothing. A protein is made by a complex system of chemical production involving other proteins, using the particular sequence of nucleotides in a gene to determine the exact formula for the protein being manufactured. Nor is it helpful to think of the gene as providing a blueprint for the production process, which merely replicates the traditional attitude of locating a control centre in the source of information rather than the manufacturing process itself. Privileging, and even separating off the information from the process is just another misleading ideological commitment when it ends in the positing of the gene as the master molecule superior to the process of production. Nor are genes self-replicating - a term imbued with the kind of mysterious power that make possessors of it seem autonomous - if anything is self-replicating it is the entire organism as a complex system. Genes themselves are made by a complex machinery of proteins

that uses the genes as models for more genes.

A living organism at any moment of its life is a singular consequence of a developmental history that results from the interaction of and determination by internal and external forces (including developmental noise). The so-called external forces, which we commonly refer to as the environment, are themselves partly a consequence of the activities of the organism itself as it produces and consumes the conditions of its own existence. Organisms do not find the world in which they develop, they make it in and through commercium. Reciprocally, internal forces (if using such language can still be made appropriate), are not autonomous, but act in response to external ones. In genetic terms, part of the internal chemical machinery of a cell is only manufactured when external conditions demand it.

Ultimately, biological determinism is the heir of a history of scientific ideology and like all ideologies it has a political agenda, which seeks to maintain the "Culture of Contentment" [Galbraith] for those holding the economic reigns. The structures of society are held simply to reflect individual predispositions (the properties of its individual members), and insofar as these traits are universal, they are held to be genetic, thus fixed and inevitable.

It is in sociobiology, more so than in any other field, that the role of science as an institution devoted to the manipulation of the physical world and as a function in the formation of consciousness about the political and social world is made evident. The individualistic basis of the sociobiological view of the world is however, simply a reflection of the ideologies of the bourgeois revolutions of the eighteenth century that placed the individual at the centre of everything. This science has also perpetuated the external/internal division myth by characterizing organisms as the battlegrounds between outside and inside forces, with organisms as the passive consequences of external and internal activities beyond their control. There is of course, no straight forward internal/external divide; no nature/nurture separation; no genetic/environmental isolation in any independent and abstract sense. Just as there is no organism without an environment, there is no environment without an organism. An organism's genes, to the extent that they influence what that organism does in its behavior, psychology and morphology, are at the same time helping to construct an environment. So if genes change in evolution, the environment of the organism will change too. Indeed, the environment of organisms is being constantly remade during the life of those living beings. And a consequence of the universality of environmental change induced by the life activity of organisms is that every organism is both

producing and destroying the conditions of its existence. *The environment (qua Heideggarian World)* has never existed and there has never been balance or harmony.<sup>14</sup>

In section 16, we asserted that the traditional ethical position is no longer tenable in the 20th century, being reliant, as it is, upon an anthropomorphization of beings under a moral law, created to favour a privileged class of human beings. The system of moral law, where ethical principles become concretized, takes as its formula the ideal of a human telos. It is the insistence upon such a telos that grounds ideological positions and makes possible the separation and opposition of Nature---Man (society), that has so long held sway in philosophy and science. This opposition has over the last century been substantially eroded, to the point where its only advancable formulation is in terms of the separation of Living Systems---Environment.

The developments that have lead to the above reconfiguration have been expounded at length in previous sections. Here, a brief revisitation and overview of their nature will suffice.

1. The increasing secularization of society in the West:

With the death of God, man has had to come to terms with the loss of his divinely sanctioned mastery over the planet. Moreover, there has been eroded, if not eliminated entirely, that image in which he considered himself created, and

consequently the disappearance of a human telos found in epistemological and/or spiritual progression toward the divine.

2. The growth in feminism, anti-racism and gay awareness movements, opening out untold histories of "others" (women, blacks and sexual deviants), of those not accredited full human status and consequently denied its rights and privileges, whilst none-the-less being subject to its laws (especially the negative ones).

3. The growing science of genetics having afforded us a means of identifying our biological proximity to other species, substantiated and textured by research into animal and human behavior. A development forcing the abandonment of speciesist categorizations of the animal kingdom as formulated by Linneaus in the C18th, which located the human animal in a separate species, genus and even family (*Hominidae*) from the apes.

4. The introduction into biogenetic computing of Artificial Life environments and their inhabitants, and equally, ongoing research into neural nets and advances in Artificial Intelligence and robotics. All of which, although still in their infancy, have already inspired our imagination and the righteous indignation and terror of the easily impressed, spawning a multitude of Hollywood morality tales warning us of the coming revolution of the all-too-human machine (*Terminator* et al). Also, in this context though remaining

unexplored here, the increasing possibility of the future production of smart matter.

5. The growth and expansion of the environmental movement and gaia philosophies. Demanding that we respect the planet and all the life forms upon it, as co-existing in a mutually dependent and a unitary system.

These developments illuminate the ways in which the opposition between Man and Nature has been eroded across a broad spectrum of disciplines:

-1. In philosophy and religion, the loss of an image of Man as created by and in the image of God has deprived humanity of its telos, where human beings were positioned above all terrestrial creatures by virtue of their privileged access to *logon ekon*. With the collapse of the human-divine telos there is no longer any *a priori* legitimating criteria for the abyss in the Great Chain of Being which separates man from beasts on the grounds that he speaks and thinks in the language of the divine.

-2. In gender, race and cultural studies, the knowledge that the human condition is historically a domain of elitist privilege, and that many humans have been firmly placed on the side of nature and the beasts (on the grounds of religious, sexual or cultural discrimination), has bankrupted the acclaimed ethical supremacy of the great white western male.

-3. In molecular biology and evolutionary theory, genetic evidence substantiating our biological proximity to higher beasts has forced us to rethink the physical grounds upon which we make evaluative teleological distinctions between species.

These first three developments transform the Man/Nature opposition in a threefold manner; by vanquishing the transcendent grounds for asserting a radical difference between man and animals; by pushing the criteria for what counts as Man into the animal sphere (where women and blacks have been denied equal human status); and, in the opposite direction, by placing some beasts alongside humans in terms of their actual and potential genetic, brain and behavioral functions. What was once asserted as a rigid distinction between man (on the side of the divine) and beast (on the side of nature) thus becomes a continuum. But the transformation does not end here.

-4. With the increasingly diverse production of new forms of intelligent self-organizing life, both wet and dry, we are confronted with a domain of artificial life, for which the traditional ethical prescriptives issuing from the man/nature opposition provide us with no guidelines with which to regulate our interactions.

-5. At both a microscopic and macroscopic level discoveries

concerning the nature of the basic elements of the universe have forced us to abandon the distinction between active life and passive matter. On the side of man, the domain of activity and production, we must account for artificially produced life, and on the side of nature, as passive and produced, for matter which turns out to be both active and productive.

In combining these five manifestations of the collapse of the man/nature opposition, we are able to locate its underlying thematics. As erroneous structural and functional distinctions are eradicated and the illegitimate mythological and religious bias' of human supremacy is undermined, we find ourselves confronted with the naked ideologies of life and teleology. It is on the basis of defining the nature and limits of these two themes interdependently that evaluative distinctions have been manufactured and institutionally maintained. These evaluative distinctions prescribe the sphere of subjectivity that is the domain of the ethical community, a community thought of as *communio*, a unity bound together by the universalizable principles and demands of human life grounded in a human telos.

When proponents of animal rights and radical environmentalism demand that we extend the ethical domain to include other beings, the call is not to follow the opening up of our



conception of life to allow for richer more productive interactions with others, but rather to reverse the movement of the post-human condition by re-anthropomorphising Nature. Here the umbilical cord of Enlightenment ideology remains intact. It is nevertheless the case that anti- or post-Enlightenment thinking has made some of its most radical advances as a result of extending and reconfiguring, rather than abandoning, the creative force of the concept of life.

## 18. Away from Ideology, towards Difference.

In their attempts to retain or recover some notion of the integrity of thought, philosophers who claim to critique the metaphysics of the subject rarely do more than merely re-configure and re-articulate (usually in a poorer form) a version of the Kantian subjective realm of transcendence. In seeking to go beyond the subject (in the sense in which a defunct concept is dropped), we speak of the "post-human", this is not however to be equated with Lyotard's "inhuman", or Heidegger's "nonsubject", both of which are merely attempts to re-conceptualize in other vocabulary the 'true' thinking subject of the Cartesian cogito - the impersonal, unidentifiable, unlocatable, ineffable subject at the heart of Kantian thinking. On the other hand, under the name of the subject, "philosophies of consciousness" (of which the Cartesian ego is but a paradigm case), persist in seeking a being whose ontological traits are those of the body, a being endowed with temporal continuity comparable to the physical continuity of a material thing, and with an identity analogous to personal identity. A move which, rather than collapsing the transcendental subject onto its immanent materiality (which may include consciousness), projects upon that idealized transcendental being a transcendent anthropomorphic telos.

Those in the former camp are, on the whole, submerged so deep in an idealized space of re-iterative Being, where thought thinks itself to the exclusion of materiality, that their dream of Dasein will ever remain just that. Those following the latter line (which has been much simplified for our purposes here) have a more real (material), abstract (material) and virtual orientation. The problem with the critique of the subject, as they see it, is that by ridding us of the ideal of free subjectivity, we are accordingly depriving ourselves of the legitimacy for posing ethical questions, for to be a subject is understood as the very definition of the moral ideal. To work to become always more (of) a subject, such is the principle of moral life.

Moral philosophers consequently tend to defend the philosophy of the subject, asserting the necessity of pursuing its theoretical entanglements, given the validity of its practical aspect.

"If we no longer had the possibility or the right to consider ourselves, even if only partially, as subjects, we could no longer pose ethical questions. We could no longer differentiate between an oppressive political regime and a regime of liberty; if we were not at least a little right in believing ourselves to be subjects, the only thing we could see would be a

different distribution of existing forces. We could no longer differentiate between a tyrant and a man who resists this tyrant; these are only different 'points of view'. The concept of the subject should therefore be maintained and justification found in its (surely unrealisable) function as 'regulating ideal.'" [Descombes. p.122]

It has been shown in the previous sections that such a belief is naive as it fails to take into account the fact that it is in the very nature of the ideology of the subject to restrict our ability to recognize, appreciate and operate within *difference*. The idea that if one takes away the moral code we would all go around enslaving, stealing from and murdering one another, (a claim coercively trotted out by the police state every time it senses its own hegemony is under threat), is itself an ideological expression of a paranoid fear of others (of difference) and is wholly unsubstantiated by fact. Indeed, if history shows us anything, it is that the contrary is the case. The worst atrocities committed by humans against other humans are invariably carried out in the name of religious fundamentalist ideals or political ideologies.

Let us then consider, at greater length, the positive force of re-configuring the concept of life beyond the traditional ethical and political boundaries (in terms of points 4 and 5

exposited in the previous section). For if we are to accept the death of the subject, its criteria, its dreams and its values, we must assess the possibility this leaves us with when confronted with new and novel (as well as already existing) associations and interactions for which we no longer have ethical guidelines. Indeed, we must discover what, if any, role is to be given to ethics in a postmodern post-human era.

## 19. Living with Rocks and Cellular Automata.

At the cutting edge of molecular and evolutionary biology, new definitions of life are being constantly proposed, in the attempt to facilitate a better understanding of the interaction of living systems with their environments (rather than re-iterating their opposition). The most widely accepted of these is composed of the following elements: that the thing be cellular; that it be based on carbon-based chemistry taking place in aqueous solution; and that there be complex molecules (DNA) that provide the program governing cell processes and carrying a genetic code inherited by the offspring. Such criteria, for all there seeming expansiveness, are still too restrictive for some bioscientists however, as they are based exclusively, upon examples that are limited to discovered forms of earth-bound 'wet' life (where, for example, out of tens of thousands of possible amino acids, we find only twenty in use in the forms of life so far discovered).

A more general attempt of establishing a wide ranging criteria comes from the joint fields of cybernetics and genetics, where life is defined as information, for although resulting from the discovery of the DNA double helix, these formulations need not necessarily be limited to the simple linear genetic code and its capability for being copied. What

we are presented with in these cases is a description rather than a definition of the crucial and fundamental basis of all carbon-based wet life on the planet which allows for an extension of the concept of life beyond both the metaphysical humanist and speciesist bias to rocks, stars, radioactivity, artificial life and aliens, as well as to plants and animals.

Criteria for the analysis of life, based upon this descriptions of information systems and processes seem abstract in comparison with their forebears. Where previously biology looked to growth, reproduction, self maintenance and self-regulation, it now turns around the elaborations of life as the capacity to evolve; as information that governs form and function and that can be replicated and passed on; and as that which exhibits some general law of self-organization in its processes. So long as it is accepted that information is not the sole prerogative of DNA (and that its process is as important as its possession), we are able to conceive of life as a semi-open system where there is both an inflow and an outflow of energy and matter.

As a definition of life, or living systems, this can be functionally useful in allowing us to describe living systems as those which must always be doing something; which at any moment of their existence must maintain a particular organization of their components in the face of potentially

disruptive forces (heat, cold, energy flows, etc.). A living system must have its structure organized in a manner that performs particular functions that attain the *end-state* of continuing the organisms existence. At any moment of its life a living organism is a singular consequence of a developmental history that results from the interaction of and determination by internal and external forces (including developmental noise). As we have already noted, the so-called external forces which we commonly refer to as the environment, are themselves partly a consequence of the activities of the organism itself as it produces and consumes the conditions of its own existence. Organisms do not find the world in which they develop, they make it, in and through interactive commercium.

In moving away from the traditional exclusive disjunction of Man-versus-Nature, philosophy and science are able to enter into new discourses based around such novel concepts of life. It is still possible however, that the new criteria will be abused by those who insist upon founding principles, effecting an anthropomorphization of living systems according to transcendently empowered ethical dictates; what occurs in such accounts is a teleologization of life.

There are three kinds of activity potentially at work in living systems: *Teleomatic* or end-resulting activity, where



end-states are attained by living systems because of the operation of processes whose existence depends upon the properties of the constituent matter alone (not on its being purposefully designed). *Teleonomic* or end-directed activity, where end-states are determined by the operation of internal controlling factors, in living systems, the inherited genetic or epigenetic factors (which set the context for further emergent properties). *Teleological* or goal-directed activity, where outcomes occur as a result of purposeful behavior, events being deliberately brought about so as to produce them.

All physical entities exhibit some sort of teleomatic activity, a subset shows teleonomic activity (primarily biological systems), and a subset of these also shows teleological systems (primarily cognitive biological systems). It is when philosophers and scientists try to give a historical teleomatic or historical teleonomic account of a living processes that there is a tendency for the explanation to become teleological by incorporating the attainment of the future end-state into the causal explanation for the activity coming to exist. Such explanations, moreover, in relying upon a fundamentally human telos, result in an anthropomorphization of the living process of the system considered, eradicating any inherent differences therein.

In terms of the origin of life, we see life emerging from through processes of self organization. Teleomatic activity giving rise to teleonomic history. With respect to the transformation of one teleonomic system into another -the evolution of species - this means that evolution is caused by teleomatic changes in inherited teleonomic properties during reproduction and ontogeny. The teleomatic processes responsible for the end-state which, although stable for generations of intraspecific reproduction, evolves into the end-state of a descendent species, do so because of the natural properties of the physical entities involved. They do not do so for the sake of the organism in which they happen to occur. The teleomatic activity of biological function does not occur for anything.

The transpecific process of evolution is not analogous to the intraspecific process of ontogeny, for only the later is directed toward an end-state. Ontogeny, a teleonomic activity, operates with an internal representation of the end-state(s) to be attained. Evolution has no similar controlling representation of what is to be. It is in drawing the false analogy that there have resulted the erroneous teleological interpretations of evolutionary change. Here the principle of an *elan vital* functions to maintain Man in a position of ethical superiority over other beings (including future ones), whether this be by excluding and alienating

them as 'other', or making them the same by including them within the confines of the human telos. In elaborating the above distinctions for a new concept of life we must also consider the theoretical consequences relating to our descriptions of even the most "base matter".

Traditionally science has viewed such substances as rock as inert or dead matter. The change in conceptual approach that we see occurring today is not simply the result of closer observation of rocks themselves, but is the consequence of a reassessment of the general approach to geological and other sciences, where past methodologies have been found to be misguided.<sup>15</sup> It is in two specific areas of consideration, that of the *environment* (involving the inner/outer distinction), and of *interaction*, that the most radical revisions have occurred. It is also these two features that have been the central pivot of our considerations of *life* (its definition and its boundaries) in the previous sections.

Tim Harper (a geologist and engineer), points out the importance of understanding the new approach to geology from a perspective of immanent interactionism:

"This new concept pictures rock as a system of vast numbers of interacting elements. It is the interaction of these elements that governs the systems behavior, not the substance of the

particles, nor, from some points of view, the details of the rules governing the interaction of the individual sand grains. Rock responds in a similar manner in response to many different forms of disturbance--it evolves to a state in which it is remarkably sensitive, ready to facilitate the next flux of energy or matter through the system....It is critical that the multiplicity of interactions occur not just internally but also externally, with the environment outside the boundaries of the system."

[Bicycling to Utopia. p.43]

In the past, geologists insisted upon a closed-system approach to observation, an isolationist methodology which designated and separated off an object (of study) from its environment and the interactions therein. It is this approach that led scientists to adopt the Newtonian concept of matter as inert. In opposition to this, the new conceptualization takes geological processes as characteristically open-systems; open system processes in the presence of a flux of energy and matter. This flux driving the feedback reactions which are typical of geological processes, leads geological systems away from equilibrium.

It is only by working within open systems, reports Harper,

that the scientist is able to record the behavior of matter under the kind of conditions that it is ordinarily constrained by.<sup>16</sup> In an open system the sample substance is free to experience the transfer of energy and/or matter to or from its environment. Where what is at stake is the mapping of the typical behavior of a material under certain conditions, yet still within its ordinary context (not isolated from its environment), observation within open systems proves to be most representative of natural geological processes.

Re-describing of rocks as *active matter* [Prigogine] moreover, enables us to tell an evolutionary story of their development in terms of processes of self-organization, where this refers to a process of order formation (coherence forming from non-coherence). This assertion may seem to contradict the second law of thermodynamics but, in fact, it does not, for the second law refers to closed systems. The order which is created in the open system is accompanied by the creation of a greater amount of disorder outside the system.

Consider the example of the rock of Earth's crust. The Earth's crust functions as an open system<sup>17</sup> in that heat flows into it from the Earth's core, and it is in a feedback relationship due to its rheology (its flow behavior), that is, it is also a non-linear system. Not only does temperature

affect its rheology but it affects temperature:

"Imagine that the rock cracks. The cracks will facilitate heat flow through the rock and the temperature of the rock will consequently change. The rocks do not simply respond to a change of the 'environmental parameters', they change their environment." [Harper. p.62]

If we are prepared to go so far as to say that interaction with the environment is one of the fundamental features of life, and even if we add that such interaction must arise out of a dissipative structure exhibiting self-organization, we are forced to admit that rocks are equally as much a part of what is designated "life" as are human beings. Can we even go further? Insofar as the cellular automata of computer simulations are modelled upon simple rule-governed interactions (allowing them to move in or out of two states only, alive or dead, on or off), and given that the essence of the "games" within which they exist is that system evolves, should we not be prepared to accredit life to them, even though they have no substance as such? Certainly this is where the concept of "Artificial Life" gets its point of access.

The "Life" game invented by John Conway in 1970's, is held by many computational biologists, to mark the moment of the

birth of Artificial Life (A-Life) systems, before that, artificially created life was a fantasy of the type to be found in Pygmalion's Galatea, Rabbi Leow's Golem, and Dr Frankenstein's monster. Projects in A-life today show that the dream of artificially created life is not just possible, but realizable, and, moreover, that it is not any longer to be thought of in terms of animation, but of replication.

Living organisms reproduce because they contain a coded program which instructs them to make copies of themselves, including copies of the program too. The instruction (in the genome, or instruction unit) does not have to contain itself, (if it did you'd end up in an infinite regress of self-referentiality), it just needs to ensure that it gets copied. The program is translated and copied. The uninterpreted program is just raw data for the duplication, while if it is interpreted, it directs the duplication.

Chris Langton (following von Neumann's lead), created a small cellular automaton which whilst being able to propagate itself, had a specific life-span (when it had no more space in which to propagate itself its instruction was erased and the next generation took over). He required that the information contained in the non-trivial unit be both translated and transcribed.<sup>18</sup> His self-professed aim was,

"to build models that are so life-like that they

would cease to be models of life and become  
examples of life themselves." [Sigmund. Games of  
Life p.26]



20. Back to Sex: poly-sexual propagation and parthenogenesis.

Although reproduction will eventually be possible wholly outside of the body, it remains a fact that for the foreseeable future, the human species will only be capable of propagating itself sexually. It is doubtless the case that many humans will become non-reproductive (though still sexually active) or asexual beings in the future as a result of our cultures move towards trans-gendering and poly-sexuality. The need for eggs and sperm will however, for the foreseeable future, require that at least some humans retain their current biological status as chromosomal and (at least minimally) hormonal males and females (genital, neurological, psychological and behavioral anomalies will not matter).

The repercussions of maintaining two separate sexes as productive bodies is important both in terms of earlier sections' considerations of the move away from binary sex and into a realm of polymorphous differentiation, and with respect to the previous sections concern with the necessary features for constituting life.

There is no theoretical reason for assuming that having two sexes will benefit us (whomever "we" may become), teleomatically or teleonomically, any more than having three or more,<sup>19</sup> and it is to be hoped that the possibility of

expanding our reproductive boundaries is a potential for humankind in its couplings with animals (animal body-parts), machines (pace makers etc.), non-conscious matter (silicone), microcircuitry (internal drug releasing devices), and eventually, beings from other worlds. Whilst such couplings will almost definitely not produce new beings in the way we currently reproduce, they are almost certain, in the long run, to create new (forms of) life. For the moment, however, whatever other diverse couplings occur, it will non-the-less be necessary for male and female genes to combine if propagation is to occur.<sup>20</sup>

The reality of the need for at least two chromosomally distinct sexes has been given very little attention by biologists and medical researches over the years. The most interesting finds in this area having arisen from work in infertility treatment and embryo experimentation, and increasingly (at a theoretical level) by those working in the area of artificial life. One of the most reasonable explanations for there being two sexes is that it is only by means of such a separation that outcrossing can be promoted. If organisms simply shed their gametes indiscriminately, the possibility of self-fertilization and its attendant risk for the offspring's genome cannot easily be avoided.<sup>21</sup> The gametes need a device to prevent them from fusing with other identical (or very similar) gametes. If a gamete of a

particular species develops such a device *X* (a chemical signal or some such), it will be prevented from self-fertilizing. The advantage of the obligate outcrossing should then spread through some (not all) of the population. Another gamete, still at risk from self-fertilization develops a similar device *Y* to give it the protection it needs, but that doesn't prevent it from fusing with the *X* gamete. *Y* gametes that can fuse with *X* gametes will be better off than those that cannot. The other types of gametes will be outcompeted, and what remains are two distinct sexes.

An alternative story for the separation into two sexes is provided by the biologist Laurence Hurst, who asserts that it is only when mating types manage to suppress warfare between mitochondrial genes that distinct sexes are constituted, and that where they only produce outcrossing, the result is incompatibility types.<sup>22</sup> The account runs as follows: Genes may promote their own propagation at the expense of the welfare of the collective. Fighting between genes is suppressed in the nucleus of cell because of the need for a double set of chromosomes. The cell produced from the fusion of two gametes, however, also inherits some genetic material which does not go into the nucleus, but is contained in the mitochondria (or other organelles). Of these latter genes the cell does not need a double dose, one set of mitochondrial cells is sufficient. Genetic rivalry thus occurs over which

gamete is to provide these genes, a battle that must result in the elimination of the opposition. Nuclear and mitochondrial cells are thus differently orientated in their attitude toward other gametes. Nuclear genes avoid conflict and have an interest in shutting down their warlike mitochondrial escorts. The nuclei from two gametes cannot both shed their mitochondrial genes however, as one set will be needed after their fusion. Only one of the gametes then must disarm itself, and be sure, along the way, not to fuse with a similarly disposed gamete. The armored gamete, catching on to the move will fuse only with those partners without mitochondria. According to Hurst's account then, to be male means to produce gametes containing only genes from the nucleus.

Yet another account is presented by the theoretical biologist, R.A. Fisher, who argues that the crucial explanation behind the separation of the sexes concerns the fact that sexual reproduction enables a population to evolve faster, by bringing together two beneficial mutations. This argument however, holds little ground today. Computation has shown that evolution is slower than expected, which means that in many cases the fate of the first mutation will have been settled before the second mutation occurs.<sup>23</sup>

H.J. Muller, with whom Fisher sometimes co-wrote, points out that sexual reproduction acts not only to combine good genes,

but also to eliminate bad ones. In asexual reproduction, he argues, there arises a seemingly inexorable accumulation of mutations, a fate which can only be offset by sexual reproduction. But this is a dubious point, for an offspring may well be unlucky and inherit the deleterious genes from both parents, rather than being lucky and getting only the good genes from both. It is hard to see what an individual can expect from the fact that its mother had sex. It non-the-less does seem to be the case that, as far as the whole population is concerned, the sexual reshuffling of genes works so as to remove deleterious mutations from some genomes, and leave those that accumulate in others to be eliminated by natural selection. As Muller claimed in 1932, "the essence of sex is Mendelian recombination".

Despite numerous attempts at its refutation, Fisher and Muller's position remains popular due to the stress it puts upon the eugenic role played by sex in restructuring a species' gene pool. From another perspective, however, it might seem that this position ascribes a kind of teleology to natural selection, an assumption that would, as we have noted, be unacceptable. Experience, after all, teaches us that where there is a clash between the group and the individual, it is invariably the individual that wins out. It may nevertheless be the case that parthenogenesis occurring as a newly hereditary program in a species (a possibility

which will be examined shortly), is bound to extinction by virtue of an inability to adapt to environmental change and/or an inability to rid itself of deleterious mutations.

Whatever the story concerning the emergence of two sexes, the fact that their reproduction occurs by both propagation (meaning that one divides into two) and sex (meaning the fusing of two cells) suggests either a bizarre and totally arbitrary, or extremely complex, and still not fully unravelled account of the history of human genetic development. The fact that human females are not parthenogenic leaves us with what John Maynard Smith refers to as the "twofold cost of sex", an expression better put by Karl Sigmund as the "twofold cost of outcrossing".<sup>24</sup> Sigmund compares the probable success of the parthenogenetic female to the female-male partnership:

"The cost is essentially due to the needless production of male exploiters. If males, however, carry their full share of parental care, then both partners invest equally in their common offspring and can be expected to raise twice as many as the single mother. This would offset the disadvantage, for a new gene, of finding itself with only 50 per cent probability in an offspring. It can try twice as often." [Sigmund. Games. p.143]

It should be noted that, in this context, what is at stake is the biogenetics of sex and not social and cultural arrangements for the rearing of children. It is quite clear that in an open society it is perfectly possible for adequately financed single parents as well as gay and lesbian couples to bring up a substantial number of healthy offspring. The point here is that the procurement of offspring still, at a certain point back down the line, requires the presence of a male sperm producer passing on male genes. The biogenetic question as to the ultimate value of that male if one of its major roles is not the rearing of children, however, does have social consequences (especially given the increase in the number of sperm banks and the possibility of storing usable sperm or embryos generated from such sperm for decades and maybe even generations<sup>25</sup>).

Furthermore, one might argue, it will not be long before it is feasible to think about trying to produce a gene for parthenogenesis in females. When such a situation arises, and given that the genetic technology is there to ensure that randomly appearing deleterious genes are eradicated or remain recessive, we will be left with a difficult question concerning the future desire of the female, namely: Would reproductive sex continue in order to propagate males (given that parthenogenetic women would produce only female offspring)?

As an addendum to this point, it should be noted that parthenogenesis does not necessarily result in the production of mere clones, for, as has already been said, the inherent genetic potential in a cell (and equally in a human being) cannot be dissociated from its environment when considering how it will develop. Also, the development of mutant genes, which occurs on a random irregular basis, would add to the differentiation within 'families', which would become more pronounced in future generations. Moreover, genetic manipulation of eggs and embryos, conjugation with other species and with species from other worlds, and interaction at a cellular level with non-carbon life forms, will open up not close down the future dispersion of difference.

Female parthenogenesis, as abstract as it may seem, is not however to be equated with the male intellectual dream of immaculate conception. If we think of parthenogenesis on a model of male self-generation we fall into error. Rosi Braidotti does this when she claims that parthenogenesis, in working against generational time, tends towards the denial of the importance of women's bodies as origins. There are two mistakes here, one is to fail to see the equation between generational time and the male kinship structures of patriarchy, the second is that in equating parthenogenesis with male immaculate conception one has already located the womb as source and made it a detachable, exchangeable organ



of the female body.<sup>26</sup>

The possible failure of parthenogenesis is protected against on the one hand by the eradication, in vitro, of deleterious genetic mutations, and on the other, by ensuring difference is introduced into the genetic equation from other (manufactured or existing) sources. The Final threat, that of failure due to an inability to adapt to new environmental changes, would seem to be an irrelevance where women are concerned. One only has to look at recent history to see how women as both mothers and workers far outdo their male counterparts in adapting their activities to suit the environmental challenges offered (something that one might reasonably assume may be reflected in the genes, before or after the fact).

In opposition to this, an environmental adaption argument against parthenogenesis is presented by Graham Bell, who poses the hypothesis that sex is the most favorable form of propagation in that it hedges bets by diversifying throughout the environment. In what Darwin called the "tangled bank of a river" situation; where the environment is saturated, diversification by sex allows more niches to be occupied simultaneously. Part of the problem with this hypothesis is that it stresses spatial rather than temporal variation as the criteria for environmental adaption.<sup>27</sup> More importantly

still, it fails to take account of the fact that environment is not just surroundings, it also concerns the infestations inside the body. The presence of microbes and their very high rate of change points to the importance of the role of microbial diseases as agents of selection.

Every higher organism is persecuted by viruses and microbial diseases. Its genetic array of immune defenses has to be constantly updated. The immune system acts as a combination lock which the parasites try to break. By trial and error, they always succeed; indeed they often succeed quite soon owing to their high turnover rate; their generation spans are usually much shorter than their host's. This means that they are always most efficient in attacking the most common immunotypes of their hosts. For the hosts, it can be deadly to adopt a combination code which is currently widespread in the population. It pays to belong to a minority. But then if it pays well in terms of genetically unmanipulated sexual reproduction, it will yield a new majority. Biologists tell us that the best chance for the host, who is kept under constant pressure to change the digits of its combination lock, is to engage in sexual reproduction in the hope that the, largely arbitrary, reshuffling of genes it produces, will afford some protection.<sup>28</sup> But there is no reason for assuming that, when it becomes feasible, high technology genetic manipulation in a parthenogenetic species will not

prove more successful. Indeed, given the benefits of parthenogenesis already cited, and the promise of diversification a non-speciesist approach to experimentation with different genetic types, and with non-carbon based life-forms presents, it seems clear that evolution will take this latter path. Evolution in the post-modern environment must take adaption, interaction and the ready acceptance of difference as its primary mode of behavior. The parthenogenetic cyborg who is able to produce non-sexually and who is ready and willing to participate in genetic experimentation and hybridization of her offspring will lead the way into this poly-sexual future. A future which can only be conceived of as a maternal femi(nin)ist immaculate conception when fed back (as mirroring opposition and threat) to the patriarchal masculinist economy of generational male-birth.

## Notes

1. Molecular biology now tells us that we share 98.4% of our DNA with chimpanzees. The 1.6% genetic difference is less than the 2.3% gulf that separates the chimpanzees from the gorillas (and the 2.2% separating two species of gibbon in the same genus).
2. The concept of Ethics being used here follows the general custom of assuming an intrinsic relation between internalized ethical principle and moral law. The misrepresentation of the positive side of ethics implicit in such use will be explored in later sections.
3. With only lower brain activity a patient may well be able to breathe unassisted for an unlimited period of time. Being "allowed to die" means removing sustenance tubes so that the person's heart eventually stops beating (a process that may take weeks), final expiration being due to dehydration and starvation.
4. For instance, testing for the production of hormone production in the brain is rarely if ever carried out.
5. Although the doctrine of the 'sanctity of life' claims that it is the essential spark of animus, of life itself, that is precious, the doctrine, in practice, applies exclusively to human life.
6. In 1992 in Pittsburgh, Dr Thomas Starzl removed the liver from a healthy young baboon and transplanted it into the body of a middle-aged human male dying of liver disease. The baboon, a healthy, sentient, intelligent, responsive animal, was killed immediately after the liver was taken; the patient died about two months later. [New York Times. 30th June and 6th September 1992.]
7. The word "person" comes from the Latin "persona", which initially meant a mask worn by an actor in a play, and later came to refer to the character the actor played. Epictetus introduced the term to philosophical discourse to refer to

the role one played in life. It was taken up by the early Christian Church and used by the Council of Nicea in 325 to solve the problem of the trinity.

8. There are many well documented cases of both chimpanzees and gorillas who have learned to communicate in human sign language and who demonstrate higher reasoning skills and self-awareness than numerous human children and mentally deficient adults. Peter Singer even suggests that whilst "the evidence for personhood is at present most conclusive for the great apes, but whales, dolphins, elephants, monkeys, dogs, pigs, and other animals may eventually also be shown to be aware of their own existence over time and capable of reasoning." [Rethinking Life and Death. p.182]

9. In 1935, the American geneticist and future Nobel laureate Hermann J. Muller was moved to write that the science of eugenics had become "hopelessly perverted" into a pseudoscientific facade for "advocates of race and class prejudice, defenders of vested interests of church and state, fascists, Hitlerites and reactionaries generally." [Quoted in Kevles p.164]

10. This concern arises almost exclusively from the memories and recounted tales of Nazi horrors during the 2nd World War. The sterilization of several hundred thousand people, human research into the genetics of individual and racial difference, and ultimately the Holocaust.

11. Nazi eugenics was itself modelled upon the eugenic laws and programs operational in the USA during the first third of the 20th. Eugenists, (predominantly the white male Anglo-saxon protestant majority) considered that the lower results attained in IQ tests by white immigrants (mostly Catholic and Jewish, Eastern and Southern Europeans) determined the innately lower intelligence of the latter, which, together with their higher birth rates, seemed to indicate the spread

of inferior genes in the population at a rapid rate. Such theorizing was a major factor in the states consequent pushing through of new restrictions on the immigration of such peoples into the USA in the following decades.

12. In the Beckers' case, Dolores Becker, pregnant at the age of thirty-seven, gave birth to a Down's syndrome baby. According to the Beckers' complaint, their physician had not informed them of the sharply higher frequency of such births among women over thirty-five, nor had he offered Dolores amniocentesis.

13. As for the concern of some in the gay community over the claim of a few geneticists to have found a "gay gene" (a position currently held in ridicule by most geneticists), even if such a gene were discovered, (and its dominance over cultural and social factors shown), there is no reason to assume that within the poly-sexual postmodern community there would be a call for the gene's eradication. It is only from the moralizing position of the state that one is liable to hear the assertion that it "fairer" to be rid of homosexuality for the individuals concerned, in order that they better fit in with "normal" and "mainstream" sexuality. Indeed, contrary to gay fears that pinpointing the "gay gene" would lead to state pathologization of homosexuality, given the increasing concerns about overpopulation it would make more sense for the powers that be to insist that beings with the "gay gene" be favoured over heterosexed humans, in order that reproduction be slowed down!

14. Human beings, in exception to other organisms, do have the ability to be able to plan the changes that may take place in their environment. Social organization does not reflect the limitations of individual biological beings, but on the contrary, is their negation:

"No individual human being can fly by flapping his or her arms and legs. That is indeed a biological

limitation having to do with our size and the size of our appendages. Nor could human beings fly if a very large number of them assembled in one place and all flapped their arms and legs simultaneously. Yet I did fly to Toronto last year, and the ability to fly was a consequence of social action. Airplanes and airports are products of educational institutions, scientific discoveries, the organization of money, the production of petroleum and its refining, metallurgy, the training of pilots, the actions of government in creating air traffic control systems, all of which are social products. These social products have come together to make it possible for us as individuals to fly." [Lewontin. p.121]

Individual biological limitations understood from viewing individuals as isolated entities in a vacuum are not individual limitations for individuals embedded in society. It is not that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. It is that the properties of the parts cannot be understood except in their context in the whole. Parts do not have individual properties in some isolated sense, but only in the context in which they are found.

15. This is not to suggest that geologists have now find the right methodological approach to get at the truth of the matter. It remains the case that the performance of materials observed, from which are developed concepts of their behavior, is crucially dependent upon how the observer chooses to view them, that is, upon the experimental test conditions and types of observation made. A geological example of this is the way in which sandstone can said on the one hand to be brittle, and on the other to flow: When a piece of sandstone is cut from a larger sample the

fragmentation that occurs upon the impact of cutting instrument and stone illustrates a macroscopic brittleness. However, if the sandstone is measured with electric resistance wire gages during and after impact, we find that, over the period of about 24 hours, the stone has expanded in size, it has flowed. When a different type of observation of the same event is made, however, this conclusion will again change. In this second observation small transducers are placed on the rock surface to measure acceleration; during the expansion of the stone after the cut it is observed that microearthquakes (within the sand particles themselves) are taking place at the rate of a few per minute. Such tiny cracking events occurring deep within the sandstone reveal that the flow is in part achieved by brittle fracture.

16. As Harper points out in his article "Dead or Alive", there is little point in subjecting a sample substance to radically non-characteristic conditions, as we will not learn much about its behavior therefrom. Harper compares such experimentation with the fantastical hypothesis of how it would be possible for a human body to leave a room by exiting through the key hole. The experiment is theoretically possible using suitable pressure-measuring devices either side of the key hole and some form of flow-measuring apparatus by means of which a mathematical description of the body's flow characteristics could be identified. Not only would such an experiment leave one with a quantity of flesh bearing no resemblance to a human being, but it would not teach us anything about the characteristic behavior of the human body exiting a room.

17. Characteristics of open systems include, energy dispersal, irreversible processes, non-equilibrium and macroscopic order arising in response to a random flux of energy or matter through the system.



18. Following Langton, John Byl went on to create still smaller automaton (of only 12 cells with 6 states and 57 transition rules), where the distinction between transcribing and translating information was barely visible, and where von Neumann's complexity threshold (including the separation of trivial and non-trivial self-replication) where blurred beyond recognition.

19. There are not many examples of multiple sexes in the animal kingdom (although in plant life there are numerous), one could however argue that creatures such as bees have three sexes--queens, drones and worker. The latter do not pass on their genes, at least not directly, but play an indispensable role in raising the offspring. Some slime moulds, incidently, have 13 sexes!

20. As many biologists have stressed, the very fact of sexual propagation is based on a paradox: Propagation, indeed, means that one divides in two, while sex consists in fusing two cells to make one.

21. Outcrossing involves the mixing of genes avoiding the intrinsic risks present in incest and self-propagation of a deleterious, non-regressive gene being passed through generations to the point where it incapacitates or wipes out the whole line.

22. Outcrossing involves the mixing of genes avoiding the intrinsic risks present in incest and self-propagation of a deleterious, non-regressive gene being passed through generations to the point where it incapacitates or wipes out the whole line.

23. It is mostly in very large populations that sex speeds up evolution, especially if the mutations are of small advantage only and occur at many different spots in the genome.

24. The temporal equivalent (put forward by Leigh van Valen), describes the permanent treadmill of evolutionary adaption. Almost any adaptive success of one species constitutes a deterioration of the environment of their rivals, their exploiters, and their prey. Every population is kept on its toes by others who are improving. If it manages to find an adequate countermove, it will only cause the others to try harder.

25. The threat of massive male infertility only further ensures the continuation of these practices. Compelling evidence by Zoologist Theo Colborn suggests that the fertility of men is dramatically declining under the influence of synthetic chemicals present in pesticides, plastics and detergents. The human body, over the last hundred years, has been swamped with chemicals known to disrupt the endocrine (hormone producing) systems. There is no evidence to suggest that there is any similar degradation occurring in female fertility, in the number or quality of eggs produced. According to Colborn and Myers, the average male sperm count has dropped from about 113 million per ml in 1940 to 66 million per ml in 1990. Attempting to refute these statistics, Pierre Jouannet of the Centre d'Etude et de Conservation des Oeufs et du Sperme in Paris, recently carried out an analysis of 1,350 males known to be fertile (having produced one or more children) and was shocked to discover that the groups sperm count had dropped steadily at 2% a year for the past twenty years. He reports "It will take 70 or 80 years before it [the sperm count] goes to zero" [Robert Allen. *The Last Generation*].

26. The powerful force of parthenogenesis lies in the idea of gestational time as something very different from generational time. Gestational time is fundamentally interactive, it is experience on the boundary of inner and outer, being and environment, one and another. generational

time, on the other hand, begins only at birth, it is a linear tree which, after birth, one is designated as part of or made addendum to. Equating parthenogenesis with male immaculate conception merely names a new tree for the matriarchal generation, and is ultimately bound to reinvent the Moral Law through duty and respect to the mother (instead of the father), here the power relations operate with the same degree of force and swing about the same axis of domination and suppression, only the name plaque on the trunk is different.

"In the feminist analysis, this detachment and objectivity [of the male gaze] are connected to the fantasy of self-generation, of being father/mother of oneself, thus denying the specific debt to the maternal."

[Braidotti Nomadic Subjects p.72]

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28. An underlying fear of the upcoming annihilation of the male shows itself in many of these attempts to retain sex as the basis of propagation of the species. Karl Sigmund remarks,

"The theory [of sex being necessary to reshuffle genes and prevent microbial disease takeover] makes me slightly more at ease about the continuation of my own kind within the human species. I can now tell people that we males are necessary for health." [Games. p.153]

## 21. Spinoza; Consciousness and the Body.

"Whatsoever disposes the human body, so as to render it capable of being affected in an increased number of ways, or of affecting external bodies in an increased number of ways, is useful to man; and is so, in proportion as the body is thereby rendered more capable of being affected or affecting other bodies in an increased number of ways; contrawise, whatever renders the body less capable in this respect is hurtful to man....Whatsoever thus increases the capabilities of the body increases also the mind's capability of perception."

[Spinoza. Ethics p.215]

Benedict de Spinoza, writing in 1677, denounced the transcendent values expounded by the Judeo-Christian morality of his times. Spinoza understood the constraining mechanisms of such values as working against the fundamental force of Life. Despite our previous definitional structure for life as based around information, and its consequent derivative values, in terms of interaction and association through thought and bodily experience; it remains true that in our era, life is often thought of as existence governed by

consciousness, such that there remains a tendency to align a teleologically conceived consciousness with the dictates of morality (the moral law, and its separation of man and nature). It is due to this privileging of consciousness and the portrayal of its operations as teleologically driven that ethics and morality have become seemingly inseparable, and any creative practice understood in terms of an ethos of the self free from transcendent dictates, a dangerous anarchistic nightmare.

Nietzsche remarks that,

"consciousness usually only appears when a whole wants to subordinate itself to a superior whole. It is primarily the consciousness of this superior whole of reality external to the ego. Consciousness is born in relation to a being of which we could be a function; it is the means by which we incorporate into that being." [Genealogy #17]

Consciousness driven by a human-divine telos is that which legitimates our calls to the existence of Good and Evil in a culture that declares itself atheist (or at least agnostic); it is the transcendental glue of the moralistic community of man.<sup>1</sup>

In his Ethics, Spinoza argues that basing the nature of the human being in the operations of the mind (consciousness) constitutes an anti-materialist position in that it refuses to take the body as a model. Privileging consciousness allows for a concretizing of ethics in the enterprise of domination of the passions, through a universalizable speciesist call to the Moral Law and its dictates. Such a position is reliant both upon an implicit dualism and the denial of the power both of the unconscious of thought and the unknown of the body. Spinoza's position, used here in creative abstraction, opens up the possibility of positing thought and the body, not consciousness, as the locus of force, whose power relations remain to be analyzed. In this context, thought cannot be separated from the body and both surpass their simplistic cognizable limits; thought surpassing the consciousness we have of it; the body surpassing the knowledge we have of it.

"The idea constituting the actual being of the human mind is the idea of the body (II.xiii.), which (Post.i.) is composed of a great number of complex individual parts." [Spinoza Ethics p.97]

For Spinoza, these parts are not independent entities as such, but are constituted in relation to one another; they are constituted through a God whose Being is relation. Such

Being is not however, like the Being of the moral community, the *stuff* of relation, it is not an organizing principle; the Spinozistic God is rather the plane of relation. It is a plane of immanence, of immanent (evolving) rules for interaction and not a transcendent realm of laws dictating or predicting effects.<sup>2</sup>

"there is necessarily in God [relation] the idea of each individual part whereof the body is composed (II.viii.Coroll.); therefore (II.vii.), the idea of the human body is composed of these numerous ideas of its component parts." [Ethics p.97-8]

The nature of the body thus lies in mutual affection. Affection is what brings bodies into existence and is always (as the basis of present and future relation) ahead of itself, not in terms of the nature of the conditions for interaction, but in respect of its realization, where interaction is always immanent to the activity of relation in the real. We may think of affection then in terms of Foucault's idea of force, whose manifestations, in power relations, is that which we term the real. Affection, as production and product of the relation of interactive bodies and ideas is spontaneous and contemporaneous, as producer, with its product (acting self-reflexively upon it). Such an

account, furthermore, allows us to re-introduce Merleau-Ponty's notion of a "postural schema" as an experimental event of bodily competence, but without the determining factor of an underlying unifying subject-focus (*focus imaginarius*).

When consciousness and the body are taken to express the limit of what is knowable (and where what is not knowable is excluded from the power/knowledge dynamic), what occurs in interactions between bodies and minds (ideas), is not a potentially productive commercium, not a potential for future becomings, but an event of closure. In this scenario, it is the body or idea taken as its own effect that interacts with another body or idea, which is also an effect. What then occurs as an interactive event is a confrontation between effects which can have only one of two results. Spinoza characterizes these as composition or decomposition, not of a thing in relation to its environment, but the relations of each thing as effect internal to itself.<sup>3</sup> What is composed or decomposed is thus the order of relations ensuring integrity and identity to the thing as isolated effect of a particular process. Composition is thus taken to be a coming together into a union (a *communio*) of the two ideas or bodies in composition (a becoming *more* through reiteration), and decomposition, the threat to internal coherence and integrity of one or other of the bodies or ideas, as effects, in



confrontation (a becoming *less*). Composition of effects is valued then as a mirroring of that original unity of consciousness predicating an identity repeated in interactions, and decomposition is that which poses a threat to that unity. The unity and identity of the effect is taken as always already given insofar as it be made knowable, through reiteration, in the compositional (and decompositional) effects of future interactions.<sup>4</sup>

Prior to the birth of the transcendental self of Enlightenment thinking, where consciousness is unable to posit itself as its own first cause through the postulation of an original Noumenally validated unity of apperception, the tendency is to invoke a God to legitimate the universalization of teleological consciousness through concepts of Good and Evil, bereft of any undetermined force. This is not the Telos we have already spoken of--the product of Humanist Enlightenment--but a Divine telos for man, which is, nevertheless a product of the threefold division man-nature-divine, activated through the Moral Law. As Spinoza remarks:

"After men persuaded themselves that everything which is created is created for their sake,...they were bound to form abstract notions for the explanation of the nature of things, such as *goodness, badness, order, confusion, warmth, cold,*

*beauty, deformity, and so on; and from the belief that they are free agents arose the further notions praise and blame, sin and merit."*

[Spinoza. Ethics. Part I. p.79]

With the coming of Humanist Enlightenment thought, where the double-bind of the self is internalized in the form of a metaphysically split subject, morality and consciousness become inseparable. The illusion of values is indistinguishable from the illusion of consciousness. When consciousness reigns over life, morality commands; rules become duties, guidelines for interaction become laws governing relations, and maps for interaction become diagrams of prohibition. According to consciousness the Moral Law is an Imperative, its only effect being obedience (respect). But the Moral law does not produce knowledge (it is neither creative nor productive), it merely prohibits, or at best, prepares the ground for future prohibitions. And yet the Law takes the place of knowledge by placing itself in the position of relationality. The law makes itself the passage of command, usurping the sensuous passage, it makes itself the hardwiring in the communications system, interposed between man and god, the ultimate relation (mute, blind, deaf, daddy).

Returning to Spinoza, we may define morality as the system of

rules and action referring existence always to transcendent values (the judgement of divine edict and the system of that judgement), whereas ethics is rather a typology of immanent modes of existence. Ethics and morality do not then simply interpret the same precepts in different ways, for whilst the Law is always the transcendent instance that determines the opposition of values (Good - Evil), knowledge operates as the immanent power that determines the qualitative difference of modes of existence (good -bad). But how are we to understand knowledge in relation to our legacy thought of as the Enlightenment project of the subject? How are we to push to the forefront a self for whom the project of desire is one of immanent critique?

From Spinoza we may derive a notion of Life, in terms of the individual body, as a complex relation between differential velocities of a multitude, a composition of speeds and slownesses upon the plane of immanence. A dynamic description of this characterizes this complex mode as a capacity for affecting or being affected, (affection pertaining to the body or to thought). Affective capacity, with a minimum and maximum threshold is thus also the basis of differentiating between individuals (rather than form, function, or structural definitions of species, etc.). Each thing on the plane of immanence, that is the immanent plane of Nature, is defined by the arrangements of motions and affects into which

it enters, whether these arrangements are artificial or natural. No thing is ever separable from its relations to the world, the interior is only a selected exterior and the exterior a projected interior. It is the speed or slowness of metabolisms, perceptions, actions, and reactions linking together that constitute a particular individual in the world, not some specular equivalent of a spatiotemporally continuous divine identity.

Furthermore, Spinoza, enables us to enact a deliverance from the abject poverty and redundancy of the Moral Law a notion of ethics as a creative plane of immanence upon which we may be able to map the force of desire in its complex power-relations upon models of bodies in becoming. The models of the body used are encoded mappings of desire, of the desiring, libidinal body, not a divinated theological geography of flesh or spirit. It is in this latter landscape that unified subjects are born, out of forms, upon a plane of transcendence territorialized according to laws of organization and development (progress understood teleologically). Upon the former, the plane of immanence (becoming), there is no form and there can be no subjects independent of specific power relations, (and there are always power relations). Upon the plane of immanence velocity is the driving force of interaction, exchange and couplings of matter and yet one is never free from the power relations

constituted therein by virtue of the emergence of new states of becoming (in combination and bifurcation events).

## 22. Foucault; Care for the Self.

The subject in postmodernity is often characterized as a transient fold in the fabric of some or other system of representation; at the level of lived experience, a mere assemblage held together by nothing more permanent than its choice among the currently existing range of lifestyles, vocabularies, modes of self-description, etc. Accompanying as a backdrop, or lurking beneath the shifting surfaces of this subject is more-often-than-not another, this time literary subject, whose purpose is the public (as opposed to private) occupation of the unifying role of aesthetic judgement, providing an image of the ideal (consensus-based) order of social existence. The problem with such accounts of the subject, whilst laudable in their pluralist intent, is that they leave no room for any argued or principled critique of consensus values, any notion that there might exist false, partial or distorted modes of consensus belief, and moreover, that the private/public dichotomy (theorized by Rorty and other postmodern liberalists) might count among the most effective means of holding such beliefs in place.

Liberal, often proclaimedly pragmatic practitioners of such Neo-Kantian aesthetic ideology merely sustain the illusion of consensus values by projecting a substitute public sphere, a

realm of intersubjective agreement--with allowance for the vagaries of private self-invention--where real world disputes and conflicts of interest can be resolved in imaginary form. Michel Foucault is one of few politically inclined postmodern thinkers to have refused to travel this path and yet to have retained a firm belief in the need to formulate some theory of what it might mean to engage in an ethical practice of life in our era.

In his later writing, Foucault revised his apparent earlier dismissal of the subject, by way of a re-engagement with Kantian Critique, in order to formulate an ethic of care for the self consistent with the general thrust of his materialist, anti-humanist concerns. Foucault excavated from his earlier archeological and genealogical investigations the seeds of an ethos which he termed "care of the self" and which, in the History of Sexuality, he traces back to the ancient Greeks. It is not until the coming of Christianity however, that the concept mutates into the paradoxical version with which we are familiar today. In Christianity the notion of Care for Self is on the one hand, the path to salvation, yet on the other, it tells us that salvation can only be achieved by way of a renunciation of self.<sup>5</sup>

Progressively through his three Critiques, Kant attempts to re-shape this metaphysically split self replacing the

Christian belief in a necessary renunciation of the terrestrial self (as a means of becoming another redeemed self after death), with the notion of a Noumenal self co-existing (outside time) with the empirical self of everyday existence (through the mechanisms of transcendental ideas, schematization and the consciously inaccessible transcendental unity of apperception). Inheriting this new division, many post-Kantian thinkers attempt to postulate the existence of the subject as a Humesque bundle of associations, de-centered, and scattered through discontinuous time.<sup>6</sup> At the same time they collapse the transcendental and transcendent (Noumenal) subject into one and the same thing (erring on the side of an aestheticised version of Spirit), whose existence, however mystical, unrepresentable and problematic, substantiates ethical and political ideologies of a communitarian bent [as elucidated in sections 2 and 3]. The problem at the heart of these commendable yet naive attempts to substantiate a politics of anti-Humanism, is an avoidance of the central role of the transcendental subject, either in its continuing operation or its absence. Without such an explanation, the consensual, coercive or contractual basis of universal subjectivity (needed for the postulation of a noumenal subject as anything other than a fiction of faith) remains mystical. More critically adept thinkers in this field, recognizing the fissure, none-the-less fail to resolve the issue, resorting



instead to a redundant call to a "being-in-common" located in relation to originary lack [Nancy], or in the postulation of an unrepresentable basis for ethico-political judgement (a *differend*) [Lyotard]. As a consequence, such post-modern attempts to de-center and disperse the subject by denying the power of transcendence, at the same time, rid us of any possible ethos of the self.

Foucault's position does not simply following a Lyotardian path of drawing out the logic of Kant's position, seeking to drive a wedge between the truth-claims of Enlightenment reason and the project of ethical self-fashioning that survives the eclipse or demise of those claims. For Foucault, the claims of both modernity and countermodernity are born and maintained out of the tension and opposition between them. Where Foucault and Lyotard are in accord is in shifting the main burden of enquiry from the relationship between knowledge and ethics (as in the CPR and CPrR) to the relationship between ethics and aesthetics (as in the CJ). This is most clearly exhibited by Foucault in his use of Baudelaire to articulate an attitude of modernity (in his essay on Kant's "Was ist Aufklärung?"). This is not, however to suggest that Foucault's close alignment to an aesthetic elaboration of the self is grounded in the communal nature of society, on the contrary, as Christopher Norris points out:

"For indeed there is evidence enough--some of it

near to hand--of what can happen when this desire to aestheticize morality and politics is made over into a wholesale doctrine of society as *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a spectacle arranged for the benefit of those with the taste or the courage to enjoy such concrete manifestations of the Nietzschean will-to-power." [Norris. Reconstructing Foucault p.96]

What distinguishes the feasibility of a Foucaultian ethos from the failures of such thinkers as Nancy and Lyotard to articulate a sense of justice, and the tendency to underestimate him in relation to their failure by reducing his position to that of Rortyesque pragmatics, is ultimately concerned with the way in which one understands the birth of the modern subject, and thence the death of its post-modern heir. (The way in which one reads Kant and faces the end of the millennium.)

Kant's Enlightenment project is expressed through the threefold question: What can I know? What should I will? What may I reasonably hope for? Foucault takes these questions resolutely onboard, yet poses them in genealogical terms, that is, as belonging to a certain, historically delimited configuration of knowledge and discourse. In doing so, he rejects the strong universalist premise that would hold such

values to be more than contingent, more than just a product of our own (waning) cultural attachment to the philosophical discourse of modernity. Foucault is not interested in preserving or rescuing from the Enlightenment project a theory, doctrine or permanent body of knowledge (whether accumulating or not), his interest lies elsewhere in the reactivation of an attitude. As he puts it,

"an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them"

[Foucault. The Foucault Reader p.50]

Enlightenment is thus taken as a symptom of the condition for which it was professed to be the cure.

"criticism is no longer going to be practiced in the search for formal structures with universal value, but rather as an historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying." [ibid. p.45]

For Foucault, the project of Enlightenment (specifically as articulated by Kant in his essay "*Was ist Aufklärung?*") is thus important to the ethos of modernity and the postmodern

condition. And this is indeed the case insofar as one must retain critique as the principle of permanent creation and transformation of self, yet a creation that is opposed to the general and simplistic thrust of humanism. Ethos, as a critical ontology of ourselves, is an attitude in which "the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed upon us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them" [ibid]. Distinct from this vision of the liberated critical self, is the disturbed subject of postmodernity whose theorization, in equating Enlightenment (the event) with Humanism (the theory), is incapable of unburdening a historico-critical self from the weight of the humanist subject.<sup>7</sup>

Foucault's position regarding the subject is neither that of the pragmatically inclined anti-theorist, nor that of an Enlightenment humanist thinker seeking to provide general precepts or ethical standards bridging the public-private morality gap. And nor is he, as some have asserted, a quasi-Nietzschean "aesthetic ideologist", a shaper of destiny sublimely unaccountable to commonplace standards of reality. Although to some extent still attached to a Kantian analysis of reason, Foucault's position requires a decoupling of ethics from any version of the old foundationalist paradigm; the idea on the one hand that self-knowledge comes about

through an exercise of autonomous practical reason, and on the other that this involves a critical reflection on the powers and capacities--as well as constitutive limits--of human knowledge in general.<sup>8</sup> At no point does Foucault fully resolve the postmodern dilemma of the politically inclined subject, yet his development of an ethos of self enables us to pose the problem of the self in terms of a "limit attitude" characterized by way of an ethical engagement that is a practice of the self resisting those religious, pedagogical, medical and other institutions that have laid siege to it in seeking to convert its experimental aims into a teleology of the subject. This work, furthermore, does not entail the transformation of metaphysics into a science of being, but is an attempt to practice freedom, where freedom is not the empty dream propounded by Utopian libertarianism, but a state of resistance and becoming in the midst of power relations; an experimental freedom that cannot be divorced from a historico-critical attitude.

"I shall thus characterize the philosophical ethos appropriate to the critical ontology of ourselves as a historico-practical test of the limits that we may go beyond, and thus as work carried out by ourselves upon ourselves as free beings."

[Foucault. The Foucault Reader p.47]

By reading Foucault in this way we are able to see that, as distinct from following Rortyesque pragmatics of ethically bankrupt politicking, Foucault pursues the practice of ethos by problemmatizing thought in respect of past and present modes of conduct and belief, enabling us to continue a discourse that transcends its confinement to the currency of in-place consensus values--those culture-specific values and norms of a given situation or context--and attains a more properly ethical perspective.

### 23. The Philosophical Ethos.

In accordance with Foucault's analysis we can articulate three main modes in the process of objectification of the self into a subject (tools of classical humanism that may or may not be utilized as principles underlying Enlightenment thought): 1) Objectivisation through pseudo-sciences of language, economics etc., where inquiries are directed at the individual as speaking subject, laboring subject, etc. 2) Objectivisation through dividing processes whereby the subject is divided in him or herself from others, eg. mad/sane, healthy/sick. etc. 3) Self-objectification through sexualization and gendering, where an individual turns him or herself into a subject by identifying themselves within a gendered and sexualized domain.

The aim of this writing in opening up a space for the desiring self in post-modernity has been pursued less through an analysis of the internal organization and rationality of subject-producing ideologies than in the elucidation of the points of resistance in and against the power structures inherent in our societies and at work in the above procedures of objectification.

As Foucault remarks;

"there is no relationship of power without the

means of escape or possible flight."

[Power/Knowledge p.225]

Power relations are part of our social structure, they are rooted in our social networks, our associations and interactions, they are not supplemental to them. Power cannot operate without an element of freedom. To understand and to transform the way in which power operates in society it is necessary to engage in strategies of resistance; to consider the agonistics of power relations and the intransitivity of freedom.

This is not to suggest, by any means, that power is the only kind of relationship, it is but one of a range of interactions in which certain actions modify others. Power only exists when it is put into action, it is a mode of action acting not upon others but upon the actions of others; an action upon an action, upon existing actions or upon those which may arise in the present or future. Power is neither violence nor coercion. A relationship of violence is a relationship where power acts upon bodies or things and not upon other actions as such. In a relationship of violence one side is changed, mutilated or destroyed, whereas in power relations both elements are necessary for the relationship to exist. It is, of course, nevertheless the case that violence and coercion can be thought of as the instruments or the results of power relations (which they all too often are),



but it is a mistake to see them as constituting the principle or basic nature of power.

Foucault tells us that the exercise of power is neither that of violence nor of consent:

"It is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an acting subject or subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action.

A set of actions upon other actions."

[Power/Knowledge p.220]

In a Foucaultian sense then, power is a question of government, where government is understood to consist in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome; structuring the possible field of action for others. Power is exercised over free, or partially free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. Upon close examination this means that power relations operate with subjects, or more accurately, that they produce subjects, which, as such, have limitations (because of their identity) with respect to what they can do or be. On the other hand, these subjects are free, that is, they (as individuals or

collectives) are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments may be realized.

According to Foucault, the human being is determined as a subject, but as a subject he is not determined to act in one particular way. When the determining factors saturate the whole there is no relationship of power. Freedom may appear as the condition for the exercise of power and disappear with its exercise. The relationship between power and freedom's refusal to submit cannot therefore be separated. Thus at the heart of the power relationship is resistance.

It is in terms of resistance, in considering the function of the concept of woman and the work of feminism that we become better able to understand the repressive power of community; by investigating transsexuality (through practices of transgendering and poly-sexuality) and sado-masochism (in its relationship with the law) that we more clearly view the way in which the concept of the body is appropriated and utilized by institutional power regimes; by looking at bio-medical life and death arguments, issues in artificial life engineering and theories of the two sexes distinction (in relation to parthenogenesis) that we are able to discover what is at stake in defining life.

If we are to try and understand the ebbs and flows, dams and tidal waves of desire in our era we must do it by looking at what it produces, that is, both the partial objects--the subjects--through which it is determined in accordance with power, and the points of resistance to that power in the production of struggles: men over women, parents over children, medicine over the population, administration over the ways in which people live. Such struggles aim at the power effects, and at those instances of power closest to those attacking or criticizing them, and they are transversal. What is opened up in through these struggles is a questioning of the status of the individual as subject in relation to the first mode of objectification, namely, the production of the subject through community.

In this context, Foucault notes that people;

"assert the right to be different and they underline everything which makes individuals truly individuals. On the other hand, they attack everything which separates the individual, breaks his links with others, splits up community life, forces the individual back on himself and ties him down to his own identity in a constraining way."

[Power/Knowledge p.212]

The activities of individuals and associations acting as points of resistance thus operate in oppositional mode;

"an opposition to the effects of power which are linked with knowledge, competence and qualification: struggles against the privileges of knowledge. But they are also against secrecy, deformation and mystifying representations imposed on people." [ibid]

What is being attacked is not a power source, not a "them" standing over and against and determining "us", but an articulation of power that is our enlightenment inheritance, a particular humanistically informed way of responding to the question "Who are we?" Attempts to address this question that cannot distinguish a practice of self from the evaluative legitimization of community, the body and life as institutional norms, are manifested in forms or techniques of domination, in the way in which power relations, by decree or naive assent, transform individuals into subjects.

It is thus through the articulation of the first mode of objectification (disciplinary, institutional knowledge) that the second (identity in the face of difference) and third (self-imposition of identity), come about. The woman, the child, the invalid, etc, are known, examined and marked in their individuality which is attached to them, legitimating the imposition of a law of truth upon them which they must recognize and respect and which, in turn, requires others

recognize and respect of them. The individual is thus made subject in a three-fold manner: subject to his or herself in being tied to their identity by self-legislation, conscience and self-knowledge; subject to others by differentiation, control and dependence; subject, in being subjected to the power relation that brings this these modes of objectification and subjectivisation about.

The target of resistance is two-fold, it is both the seeming source of repressive power, the State and other institutions and the real source of maintenance of that power, the subject of the State (subject-citizen).

Foucault remarks that:

"Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are. We have to imagine and to build up what we could be to get rid of this kind of political 'double bind' which is the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures. The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from state institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through

the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed upon us for several centuries."

[Power/Knowledge p.216]

Distinct from the creation of a subject through the modes of objectification, the practice or shaping of the self allows for the individual to see differences within themselves that are not simply oppositions, for although they may be contradictory, they become oppositional only through the disciplinary process of objectification that demands objective differentiation in respect of spatiality, that is, otherness: me healthy--him sick; me sane--her insane, etc. When these differences are held together in the individual they fail to constitute an institutionally defined identity that is projected onto others, rather, they are temporally marked as becomings in an ethos of radical presence to self. Power relations, as actions playing upon other actions, are interactional games of self experimentation. The conflict within the Kantian and post-modern quasi-Kantian subject, on the other hand, is not a game but a battle resulting from a coerced and threatened Freudian superego, a conscience, whose ethical choices orchestrate and articulate difference in a hierarchy of value and simple opposition of good and evil. Difference for such an individual is of the second and not the first order desire.

Kant and Freud alike maintain an attitude of principled respect for the truth-telling virtues of enlightened thought, its capacity to bring forth redemptive self-knowledge from the chaos of instinctual drives. As Norris remarks, if we are to understand the kinship of Kant and Freud we must;

"comprehend the Freudian text as an *ethical* discourse marked through and through by the symptoms of the conflict between reason and desire, the dictates of internalized (social or moral) conscience and the promptings of instinctual gratification." [Reconstructing Foucault p.101]

Moreover, he tells us,

"What separates Foucault from both Kant and Freud (not to mention Lacan) is his aestheticized version of the ascetic imperative, that is to say, his understanding of ethical discourse as premised on a constant exploration of new possibilities, new modes of being whose aim is solely to enhance or intensify the pleasures of 'autonomous' selfhood." [ibid. pp. 101-2]

The conflicts that arise within the pursuit of a Foucaultian ethos are thus radically different from those struggles between internal pleasures or desires and external (but internally imposed) order of properly ethical principles and

values, that are the feature of a Kantian and Freudian outlook. For Foucault, such conflicts cannot move beyond the process of intensifying self-cultivation and experiment.

Norris' use of "autonomous selfhood" in respect of the practices of the self is however, misleading. Foucault was well aware that in the destruction of god, as displaced vision of human desires for autonomy and centrality in the universe, there was also effected the destruction of that autonomous self as inventor dependent upon his own fictive creation. It is no longer possible to allude (however vaguely) to an idealized human conception of a fully integrated psychically whole self. Man has created a vicious circle that he is finding it hard to escape from: he invented a god who was to make man's position central in and to the world and who would act as powerful deflection of desires to have control over all that he saw, all that he perceived as a threat to his new-found identity. Man however, found himself unable to live up to the image of mirrored-god ("more than man") and thus came to despise himself; even more so once he was forced to acknowledge (through the demands of self-knowledge) that his god was merely that displacement of his desires.

Humanism allowed man, through a false opposition of life versus the transcendence of human values, to posit a system



of dialectic, by means of which he is able to harmonize, on the one side, his self-loathing and on the other, his essential idealized noumenal subject-status beyond the human condition. In this manner, life was resolved into the meanings man so desired. The Humanist definition of life is a definition in flight from that which it purports to define. The flows of matter and desire in and through our bodies and in our relations with other bodies can be neither united nor unified.

Practices of the self in the post-human condition are not exercises in autonomous subjectivity but engagements in the becoming self(ves) that the interactions and associations in life present us with. There is no inherent contradiction in positing a de-centering and dispersion of the subject, whilst at the same time insisting upon the creative and experimental exercise in becoming of the self.

In the conscience of internalized reason, under the accusation of moral responsibility and the guilt occasioned by unfulfilled Humanist Enlightenment promises of progress, man creates a desperately idolized version of himself, a Deity, that he tries to emulate in order to become more than himself; in the words of Immanuel Kant, to become more than man. In this narcissistic quest of the fragile ego the penalty for both failure and success is exacted upon the

landscape of desire in the construction of real, ideal and abstract domesticating structures, or in sanctifying spaces wherein these structures are deemed to have been lost.

The tradition of demanding both silence and confession of the body, its sensuality and its sexuality has played a large part in the effectiveness of desire's incarceration. As we speed towards the end of the millennium, however, the old taboos are being broken, and not just in private. Our culture is one obsessed with the performance, analysis, documentation and exploration of sex, accompanied by a glorification of the body which has moved beyond the space of the confessional box, breaking both the internal and external barriers of silence. The fear of a resulting free-form anarchic desire pervades paranoid postmodern discourse:

"For centuries desire has been conditioned to salivate like a dog whenever there is something to be transgressed. Prohibitions though, have lost most of their power. Were they to fade out any further, desire as we experience it may well break down altogether." [Sylvere Lotringer. p.275  
Polysexuality]

These concerns must be addressed if we are to prevent a reactive re-domestication of desire, carried out in the name of its own survival. Desire is not a mode of action or

thought in need of protection, it is not a protected species whose existence would be threatened by releasing it back into the wild. Desire does not function only in relation to the instantiation of restrictions for it to transgress. Desire is its own medium. Forces of Being and Becoming shape desire in teleomatic, teleonomic and teleological orders, producing beings in whom the transcendental potentials for self-transformation are immanent to their existence, their thought and their actions.

"One must realize that representing desire, putting on stage, in a cage, in prison, into a factory, into a family, being boxed in are desired, that domination and exclusion are desired; that extreme intensities are instantiable in these assemblages too. "

[Lyotard Libidinal Economy p.12]

The landscape of desire is neither an isolated island nor a sanitized space for production and progress. Whilst the transcendental conditions for its becoming are immanent to its production (with no nasty transcendent surprises), it suffers, as do all processes, from the occasional occurrence of unheralded noise. Unpredicted tornadoes, tidal waves, droughts and squalls can wreak havoc upon structures of being and re-configurations of becoming alike. Noise, is an

irregular and largely unpredictable element in life; the unusual and intense interactions it makes possible that may seem to have been determined by some outside force are rather instances of freedom within the system.

#### 24. Post script on feminism.

This thesis has emerged partly out of an engagement with two feminist theories which can be characterized as follows: Firstly, from Luce Irigaray, an account of the feminine sex as a space of unmarked linguistic absence within the masculinist economy; the impossibility of a grammatically denoted substance, leading to the exposition of that substance as an abiding and foundational illusion of a phallogocentric discourse. Secondly, from Monique Wittig (and before her Simone de Beauvoir), for whom it is explicitly and exclusively the female sex that is marked, the female sex as 'lack' or 'other', immanently and negatively defining the subject in its masculinity.

This latter position has been encouraged to run its course, leading to an annihilation of male subjectivity, although without re-instating in its place the birth of a new universal female subjectivity. The former, meantime, has been followed through its exposition of the workings of a feminine symbolic of Woman, operating both transcendently and transcendently in the structuring of (male) consciousness and the social, cultural, economic, moral and political values that accompany what is referred to as the rational mind or *sensus communis*. What has been attempted in this move is a differentiation between the positive force of Enlightenment

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critique and the negative pursuit of, or reaction to humanist Enlightenment theoretizations which re-enforce the supremacy of male subjectivity (in the constructions of community, the body and concepts of life), in terms of their ideal or real Being or their Lack. These moves, as has been shown, lead inexorably into the post-modern miasma of postulating a Baudrillardian unrepresentable feminine seduction or Krockeresque apocalypse vision.

In taking seriously the materiality of its assumed feminism and in joining the forces of the two feminist positions stated, this writing has endeavored to move out of and beyond the limits of the classical representational system as such. Through a complexity of alliances and associations the attempt has been made to clear away the architectural and institutional debris from a large area of the landscape of desire in order to enable new rhizomatic configurations of rigorous critical materialist feminism to take root.

The poly-sexual trans-gendered future, by virtue of its being rooted, is unable to escape participation in a critique of historical formations and the practices of political expediency. Politics is a necessary part of freedom where domestication and colonization are deemed unproductive. What feminist materialism pitches is a politics of coalition, but not one which posits an ideal unifying structure that would

guarantee unity as the outcome in advance. The insistence in advance on coalition unity as a goal assumes that solidarity, whatever its price, is a prerequisite for political action. The coalition politics of the post-human condition has no agreed-upon identities or dialogic structures and thus can have no a priori or absolute historically established identities as place holders for commercium. Identities no longer constitute the theme or subject of politics but rather come into being and dissolve in accordance with the concrete practices constituting them.



## Notes

1. Recently, in the case of the sixteen children murdered in Dunblane, the invocation of "evil" in political, academic and media reports and discussions, was almost universal. Calling upon this term allowed its invocators to free themselves of any guilt or responsibility over the conditions making such action possible. By making this move, moreover, there was brought about a moral community of innocent onlookers, legitimated in accusing any who would not join them as potential collaborators, or at least unwitting facilitators of the event of evil.

2. The Spinozistic God is not something other, something more or less, than the commercium of bodies (and as such, of ideas). His Being is not the binding determinism of the moral law which, as the condition for and of communio, posits consciousness as the universal criteria for the being of animate, thinking flesh.

3. These results in terms of the interaction of effects, can be translated into a Kantian framework by re-describing them as the harmonious and disharmonious action created in respect of the interaction of the faculties of the mind (as in the Critique of Judgement), both of which are necessary for the sublime experience from out of which emerges a fully constituted, disciplined subject.

4. The most obvious example of this being the ten commandments of Christianity.

5. The Christian "love of self" is merely an extension of renunciation of self in that it involves a projection of self onto external goods which must in turn be denounced as worldly attachments.

6. Hume's reflection on the self led him to a point where identity dissolved into a flux of transient impressions, memories, desires, anticipations and such like evanescent mind-states; a stream of consciousness whose unity--or the

comforting illusion thereof--could only be explained in terms of associative linkage. For in the end these phenomena involved nothing more than contiguity in space and time, allied to mere force of habit and the influence of ingrained social convention. There was thus, he concluded, no "deep further act" about the nature of human selfhood, no integrating principle that would constitute the subject as a locus of autonomous thought, agency and will.

7. Enlightenment, as Foucault remarks, is

"an event or a set of events and complex historical processes, that is located at a certain point in the development of European societies. As such, it includes elements of social transformation, types of political institution, forms of knowledge, projects of rationalization of knowledge and practices, technological mutations that are very difficult to sum up in a word, even if many of these phenomena remain important today. The one.... that seems to me to have been at the basis of an entire form of philosophical reflection concerns only the mode of reflective relation to the present."

[Foucault. The Foucault Reader p.43]

Humanism, on the other hand, is a theme or set of themes that occur on several occasions over time (with varying content and values) and are tied to value judgements, serving as a critical principle of differentiation. Since the seventeenth century, humanism has relied on certain conceptions of man borrowed from religion, science or politics, serving to colour and justify these conceptions. As such, it has little, if indeed any use as an aid to reflection.

8. Kant's Conflict of the Faculties underlines the claim that the Enlightenment project is concerned primarily with attaining intellectual and moral maturity through the

exercise of criticism in its various modes, whether applied to issues of theoretical reason (where intuitions must be brought under adequate concepts), to questions of an ethical or political order (where practical reason supplies the rule), or again, to issues in the sphere of aesthetic judgement where the relevant tribunal can only be that of an intersubjective community of taste appealing to shared principles or criteria of value. For Foucault, this doctrine of the separation of the faculties is itself a transcendental illusion, unsustainable in the ensuing battle between modernism and its countermodernist other.

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